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Teaching Art History from a Biblical Foundation:

Art History as a View into the Great Controversy

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Abstract

This paper provides a broad historical overview of how Judeo-Christian philosophy and values have been communicated through the arts. It suggests that our need for artistic expression is part of our search and longing for what is greater than us. This is a divine mandate for the Bible asserts God as an artist and the role His creativity plays in the relationship between God and humanity. But Exodus 20 also indicates that this relationship can be misused and misunderstood with the prohibition of idolatry. There is a clear biblical differentiation between the wise artist, who uses art for the search for truth, and the foolish one, who uses it as false worship. The connection between art and worship continues throughout Church history especially when it receives power through Constantine. This power is intertwined with religion so that late medieval art shows the views that the Roman Church and the Dominican friars have of themselves in their salvific role and power over the Lord's "flock." The abuse of power was challenged and Protestant artists expressed their views in writing and the arts. Protestantism posed a threat and at the council of Trent decisions were made to use art to establish Roman Catholic doctrine in a more forceful manner. By the eighteenth century the Church was using maps to enhance their absolutist views and to stake out their power in a global manner. Ambitious emperors who were also vying for the same territory grew tired of papal ambition and in 1798 Napoleon imprisons Pope Pius VI as predicted by prophecy. A new secular spirit is evident in the French Revolution and this can be observed through the art of the modern era.

Keywords: art history, biblical foundation, reformation, creativity

Teaching Art History from a Biblical Foundation: Art History as a View into the Great Controversy

Introduction

Art has communicated human values and philosophies throughout the millennia of time. In this sense, it can be used to understand the shift in cultural values and help us trace the biblical historicist interpretation of prophecy, as championed by Protestants during the Reformation. In an effort to reassert this understanding, this paper will give an overview of how artists have expressed philosophical and religious views of their times. This research will also include a summary of the biblical position on the role of the artist, analyze artworks expressing the Roman Catholic Church's views of its own salvific role, and show how protestant artists expressed their frustration with the Roman church. Finally, I will demonstrate how contemporary art has lost its religious purpose (especially after the French Revolution) and is currently dominated by existentialism that has often turned nihilistic, abusive and self-destructive.

Art as Expressions of Worship: The Relationships between Creation and Creator

In the ancient world, most societies were theocratic and religion and art were intricately connected. Statues were understood to serve as surrogates for the spirit of the gods, and pious believers made art to appease the gods. In Egypt, statues were believed to be inhabited by the king's spirit even long after his death, so that he would continue to be worshiped. Sumerian statues with large eyes, found at Tell Asmar, stand in a reverent posture admiring the skies. These statues were usually deposited in temples as votive offerings and represented the constant supplications of the worshiper before the gods. Here, perhaps, we see the ancients already searching for ontological meaning or wondering what lies beyond their mundane existence. The fact that even the remotest village or most ancient civilizations searched for the divine reminds us of the biblical text found in Ecclesiastes 3:11 when it states: "I will put eternity in their hearts."

The making of art is a quest for meaning. In so doing ancient art is connected with spirituality and theology. Today art, if done under the guidance of God's Spirit, can bring us closer to Him in the act of creation. Creation was the act in which God revealed His character to us, beginning the relationship between creator and creature. In turn, our creativity can be the venue that best reflects our relationship towards God, molding us in the

image of God. It is our personal characteristic that sets us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom, as Dorothy Sayers states: “The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make things” (Ryken 2006, p. 23). This is what made humans the crown of God’s creation.

God’s creative act reveals the spiritual interaction between the Godhead, “Now the Earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis. 1:2; Davidson 2000). This describes an artist. God is looking at an empty canvas at which His Spirit (the source for inspiration) moves Him to pour out into creative activity. This same Spirit, when present within the artist, can overflow into music, poetry, and art. In the case of Bezalel and Oholiab we know that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit and interacted with God when following the specific instructions on how to build the wilderness sanctuary (Exodus. 25:9; Ryken 2006, p. 20; Davidson 2000, p. 207). With our artistic gifts we are called as Bezalel to ministry. Exodus 35:30-35 (RSV) reads:

See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, Son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He has filled **him with the Spirit** of God, in **wisdom** and **understanding**, in **knowledge** and all manner of workmanship to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting in carving wood and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship. And He has put in his heart the ability to teach.... He has filled him with skill to do all manner of work.

a. Art and the Search for Truth

In *Art for God’s Sake* (2016), Philip Ryken states, “To be pleasing to God, art must be true as well as good” (p. 39). Talent and truthfulness, a full understanding about God, are united to make art good. Ryken continues: “Truth has always been one important criterion for art. Art is an incarnation of the truth. It penetrates the surface of things and portrays them as they really are.... Modern and postmodern art often claim to tell the truth about the pain and absurdity of human existence, but that is only part of the story. The Christian approach to the human condition is more complete, and for that reason more hopeful (and ultimately more truthful)” (p. 39). In this spirit, art can praise God in a powerful way, and this type of art is not idolatrous because it speaks of a universal truth. Perhaps this point is best explained with a story related by Ken Gire (1996; originally from C.S. Lewis) of a prisoner who was thrown into a dungeon whose only light came from a barren window high above.

In the dungeon the woman gave birth to a son. As he grew, she told him about the outside world, a world of wheat fields and mountain streams and cresting emerald waves chasing on golden shores. But the boy couldn't understand her words. So with the drawing pad and pencils she had brought with her into the dungeon, she drew him pictures. At first she thought he understood. But one day while talking with him, she realized he didn't. He thought the outside world was made up of charcoal-gray pencil lines on faded-white backgrounds, and concluded that the world outside the dungeon was less than the world inside. The Story is a parable, showing us in much the same way the artist tried to show her son, that all we see before us are merely pencil sketches of the world beyond us. Every person is a stick-figured image of God; every place of natural beauty, a charcoal rendering of Paradise; every pleasure, a flat and faded version of what awaits us. But we need to be boosted to a window before we can see beyond the lines of our own experience. Only then will we see how big the trees are, how bright the flowers, how breathtaking the view.... When we look at a work of art, it becomes a window hewn out of the dungeon wall that separates this world from the next (p. 84).

The only way a Christian is able to paint about this greater truth is through an honest relationship with God where he/she will receive His wisdom and inspiration. Kant states that "Art exists as the clearest, most tangible testimony to man's affinity with God" (cited in Sultanik 1986, pp. 25-26).

Biblical View: Art and False Worship

In contrast, Exodus 20:1 speaks of another spirit that drives art making. It reads: "They shall not have other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the water under the earth...." (see Deut. 4:16). If read alone, this verse can be understood to say that making any artistic representation is contrary to God's law, a position that has been held at times by Christianity and still is today by some Jews and Muslims. Distinctions between idolatry and art making have to be made to clarify the biblical basis for art. According to Scripture, understanding, knowledge, and inspiration by God's Spirit form the basis for Christian art. Because of Bezalel's knowing the truth about God his art was not idolatrous. On the other hand, notice what the Bible says about the idol maker in Isaiah 44: 9-19:

All who make idols are nothing and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are **ignorant**, to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol which can profit him nothing? He and his kind will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men.

The Bible tells us that these kinds of artisans use the same wood to make a fire, to bake his bread and make an idol which "knows nothing, and understands nothing" (Isaiah. 44:18). In Isaiah 44:19 God speaks with irony,

No one stops to think, no one has the **knowledge of understanding** to say, 'Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?' He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say 'Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?'

The Seduction of False Religion Through Art

The power of art can be seductive, persuasive and destructive, as through it, we get used to violence, evil, false worship and propaganda. In Egypt, God knew how persuasive art had become to the Israelites. Egypt was one of the most advanced civilizations of the ancient world and had sophisticated artistic and architectural achievements. However, the Egyptian art was connected with spiritualism and the underworld. It powerfully promoted false worship, fertility and sexuality. It was connected with witchcraft, magic, spiritualism, and was idolatrous as understood by the Jewish nation. Egyptian religion believed in the immortality of the soul, a direct reflection of the lie Satan spoke to Eve in the garden when he said: "You will surely not die" (Genesis. 3:4). Egyptian art and worship, like the serpent in the garden, was aesthetically pleasing, but this beauty was used to confuse and promote falsehood. We could speculate that one of the reasons God asked the Israelites not to make images, in Exodus 20, was to clear their minds from the powerful visual sense that had been connected with false worship. Ellen White states, "The costly and beautiful monuments of heathen worship would please the fancy and engage the senses, and thus allure the Israelites from the service of God. It was to remove this temptation from His people that the Lord commanded them to destroy those relics of idolatry, on penalty of being themselves abhorred and accursed of God" (*ST*, April 21, 1881; 2BC 996.5). As Christians we must remain clear minded and beware of our strongest sense – our visual experience.

Throughout history we can see how seductive the visual experience has proven to be. Greco-Roman art and philosophy was just another form of self-worship. Greek sculpture especially focused on the human form. The games became a special time when men would come together to compete, make offerings and worship their gods. Francis Schaeffer (2005) states that "the gods in Greek and Roman thinking were like men and women larger than life, but not basically different from human men and women" (p. 21). We know from Greek and Roman mythology that the gods lusted after each other, burned with jealousy, and plotted each other's deaths. Jerry Sittser, in his book *The Will of God as a Way of Life* (2004), states: "God transcends physical reality, national boundaries, and tribal ownership. He forbids us from reducing God to an idol.... Idolatry undermines God's ultimate purpose. When we reduce God to an idol, we make God into our image.... As God gets smaller, so do we, for the kind of God we worship will determine the kind of people we become" (p. 70). Paul addressed this problem during Roman times in

saying that “Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Romans. 1: 20-21).

Idolatrous worship became a repeated pattern throughout history in which humans worshiped creation and not *The Creator*. Philosophy is driven by the questions such as: To whom do I give glory to or direct my worship towards? Historically, the basis for most philosophies rests on tradition, reason, experience and culture, all of which fall back on man as its point of departure.

Religious Ideology and Imagery

Politics, Power, and the Roman Catholic Church

When Constantine legalized Christianity, much of these pagan beliefs entered into the Christian faith. According to White (1911), “Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church.... Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles ... in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions” (p. 65). Even during the Christian era, we returned to a philosophy that was based on human tradition.

During the Middle Ages, salvation was thought to be given through the church via priests and Popes who “exercised power without limit” (White 1911, p. 76). This doctrine was not biblical and undermined what Christ had done at the cross. In a fresco painted by Andrea da Firenze in the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, *The Triumph of the Church* expresses this point clearly. Between heaven and earth the Dominican priests are responsible for guiding the saints into salvation (Figure 1).



(Figure 1) Andrea da Firenze. *Triumph of the Church*. C.1366-68. Fresco, width of wall 31'6". Chapter House, Sta. Maria Novella, Florence.

The entire chapel speaks of how the Dominican priest's role is vital and this can especially be observed in the lower section (in the foreground) where dogs (which are metaphorically standing for Dominican priests) attack wolves (standing for heretics) which were a threat to the "Lord's flock" (fig 2).



(Figure 1.a) Andrea da Firenze. *Triumph of the Church*. C.1366-68. Fresco, Detail of “the dogs of the Lord”. Chapter House, Sta. Maria Novella, Florence.

This fresco was painted when the papacy was at Avignon, a time when there was a rise in skepticism and political intrigue between the church and the French crown. It was an attempt by Dominican friars to establish their role as protectors of Catholic doctrine. Salvation, according to this fresco, is only obtained through the Roman Catholic church seen in the background. Eventually the popes returned to Italy and were determined to heal and re-establish the church through art and architecture. Within the Sistine Chapel, artists were given the subjects to reaffirm the papal role. An example of this is *The Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter* by Perugino (Figure 2).



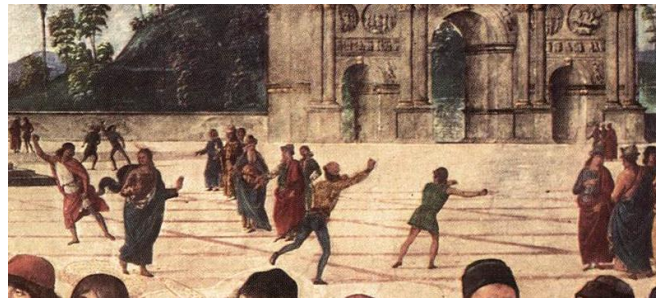
(Figure 2) Perugino. *Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter*. c.1480-82. Fresco, 11'51/2 x 18'81/2". Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV.

Here the artwork depicts an interpretation of what is said in Matthew 16:17-18. This image establishes the Pope who inherits the keys of the church directly from Christ. Peter, metaphorically the first Pope, is flanked by two triumphal arches both containing inscriptions that compare Pope Sixtus IV with King Solomon; the keys and the Roman arches identify Sixtus as the victorious temporal and religious ruler. The octagonal church directly behind Peter is a reference, not only to Solomon's temple, but also to the Hagia Sophia, rebuilt by Justinian in 537 who likewise identified himself with Solomon. This placement connects the popes in time and space with a long established lineage of powerful religious and temporal rulers. The perspectival lines bring our eyes from Jesus and Peter to the centrality of the church. This painting was made to legitimize papal authority and give him the justifications needed for the expense of demolishing the old St. Peter's basilica and rebuilding it anew in 1506.

The fresco further threatened those who did not agree. In the background *The Tribute Money* can be seen on the left referring to Christ's command that his disciples pay taxes (Figures 2a&b).



(Figure 2a)



(Figure 2b)

(Figure 2a & b) Perugino. *Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter* c.1480-82. Two Fresco Details, 11'51/2 x 18'81/2". Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV.

The payment of taxes is in reference to the selling of indulgences so they could to raise the funds necessary for the grand renovation of Rome. To the right (fig. 2b) there is a depiction of *The Stoning of Christ*, referring to the story found in John 8:31-59, which tells us of certain unbelieving Jews who did not accept Christ as the "I Am." This image was to remind viewers of how unbelievers were wrong in doubting the authority of Christ, much as those contemporaries doubting the role of the pope. The entire symbolic program, of the Sistine Chapel, legitimized the Mass and Papal policy, and the placement of each image within the church strategically carried the

theatrical message. An example of this is found in the fresco directly across the *Christ Giving the Keys to St. Peter*. The fresco was painted by Botticelli on *The Punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram by Strange Fire Falling from Heaven*. This image served as a reminder of how God judged those who doubted Moses' leadership and that Aaron was God's chosen priest.

The biblical message (found in Numbers 16) was a reminder of the consequences that befell those who questioned God's chosen leaders. It was designed to intimidate and subdue questions chapel visitors might have on the Papal authority.



(Figure 3) Botticelli. *The Punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*. C.1445 – 1510. Fresco, 11'51/2 x 18'81/2". Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV

This authority came under heightened scrutiny when Luther posted his 95 theses in Wittenberg's church doors in 1517.

The Protestant Responses Expressed Through Art

Luther had reacted directly against the increased sales of indulgences that had been encouraged by Rome, in order to fund extravagant projects (such as the rebuilding of Saint Peter). By 1564, strategies were in place to reaffirm Catholic orthodoxy and use art and architecture further as statements of absolutist power (Davies 2007, p. 660).

Protestant artists now expressed their views about how they interpreted Rome's need for power and money. When the Wittenberg professor, Paul Eber, died in 1569, Cranach the Younger was commissioned to paint a memorial commemorating his life, entitling it *The Vineyard of the Lord* (Figure 4).



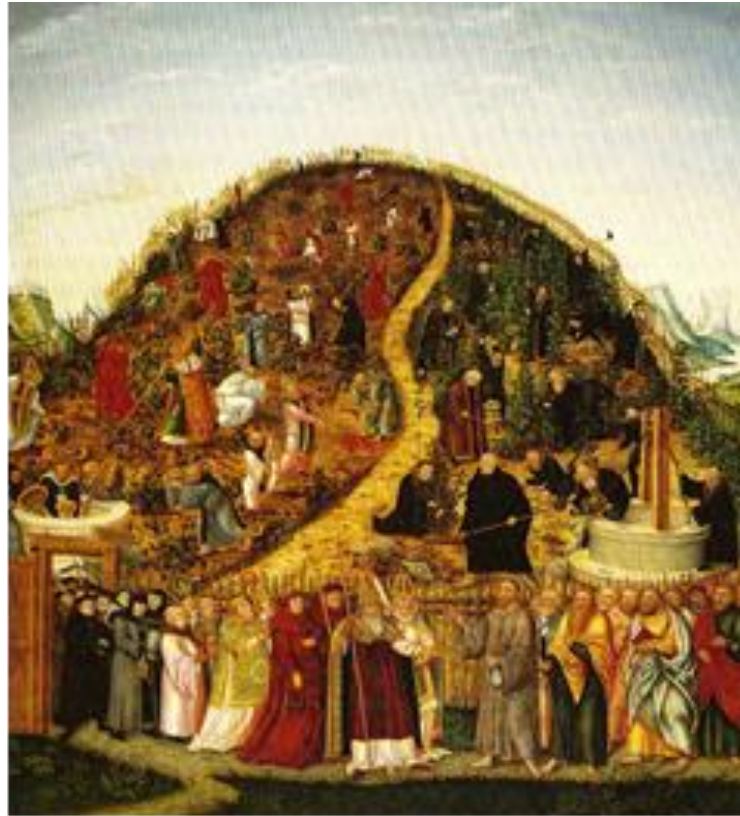
(Figure 4) Lucas Cranach the Younger. *The Vineyard of the Lord*. C. 1569. Wood Panel, Epitaph of Paul Eber, St. Mary's the Parish Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

The scene is based on the story found in Matthew 20:1-5: "The Kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right. So they went."

Luther is at the center because his work for the Reformation divides people and brings out the truth. Opposite him, Philipp Melanchthon is drawing fresh water from the well. Melanchthon was known to be a true humanist who followed the motto "Ab fonts" (back to the sources). He was the scholar who had good knowledge of classical languages and helped translate the Bible. Johannes Forster, who is represented watering the parched soil to promote the growth of vines was another Bible translator who traveled extensively tending to the young sprouts of the Reformation. Above him is Johannes Bugenhagen, wearing a superintendent-general's coat, working

with a hoe. Bugenhagen organized and managed several Reformation movements throughout as he ordained pastors for the new faith. The hoe implements order and the robe served to stress the role of this man whom Luther once introduced as the bishop of Wittenberg. Others included represent Georg Major, Paul Crell, Caspar Cruciger, Justus Jonas and Flacius Illyricus, leaders of the reformation. Artistic humor was common during this era and is also included here with two court officials bringing manure from one side to the other. Albrecht Steinwachs, in his book the *Vineyard of the Lord* (2001), comments that the manure bearers are the only people to cross the dividing line between the vineyard and states that “At least the muck from one side can be useful to the other” (p. 21).

Despite the rift between the workers, the idea depicted is that they were working the same vineyard. The depiction of the work being done on the other side of the divide is less flattering. The fence is in disarray, the vineyard looks dead, and what is left of it is being killed. Probably with the many martyrs being burned at the stake, Cranach the Younger depicts a bishop burning the vineyard instead of tending to it. Notice how this is central and close to the dividing path. He also comments on the corruption within the church by depicting monks drinking as they work or playing cards as a deck falls from another monk’s cloak. Others are shown to be starving their vineyard from the truth by filling the well with rocks to stop the flow of water. Christ, who is the owner of the vineyard, is dressed more modestly than the papal curia that comes to collect their pay. Notice that the coin has already been placed within the hands of the pope, but he still extends his arm as if to ask for more. Christ has to raise his hand as if to say “enough.” Matthew speaks of the workers who complained about money in Matthew 10:16; “So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.” The idea of both sides working the same vineyard was soon to be made more difficult and expressed in another painting he would make just 13 years later (Figure 5).



(Figure 5) Lucas Cranach the Younger. *The Vineyard of the Lord*. C. 1582. Wood Panel 167.5 x 145.4 Johann-Friedrich-Danneil-Museum Salzwedel, Germany.

Commissioned by the local people to make a new painting of the *Vineyard of the Lord*, Cranach the Younger deliberately used the same motif with starker contrasts. This time, Luther is raking together papal writings and has turned his face towards the other half as Jesus and his disciples are standing on the Reformer's side. By the more pronounced divide between the groups, we deduct that this represented the increased tensions between Protestantism and Catholicism. By this time the famous massacre of the Huguenots in France, for instance, had already taken place.

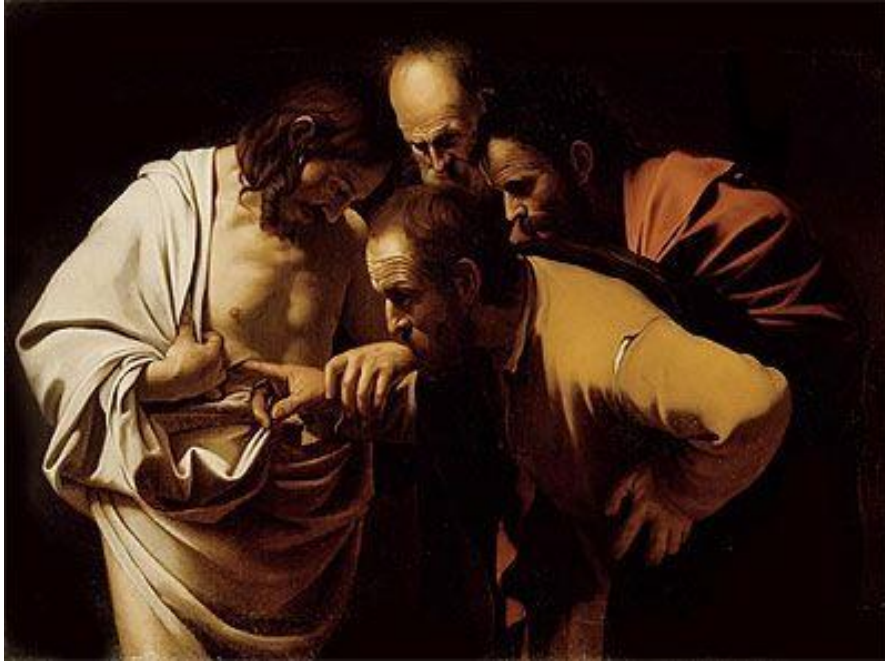
Art and the Counter Reformation

The Roman church however was tenacious in maintaining its position and the threat to their power was especially dealt with in December 1545 when Catholic bishops, clerics, and Pope Paul III gathered at council of Trent. By then, Protestantism had grown greater than the late Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, had ever imagined. The counter-reformation efforts used art as the heavy artillery; however, at the Council of Trent, other artists were also scrutinized. Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* within the Sistine chapel was under attack. Because

Michelangelo believed in the beauty of the human body, he twisted these forms for expressive effect. Art after Michelangelo had become sensuous, shallow in spiritual content, and decorative rather than educational in its purpose. Speaking of Michelangelo, Messer Biagio da Cesena, the papal master of ceremonies, complained that “it was a very disgraceful thing to have made in so honorable a place all those nude figures showing their nakedness so shamelessly and that it was a work not for the chapel of a Pope, but for a brothel of tavern” (Davies 2007, p. 785). As a result, a year later, Daniele da Volterra was commissioned to paint over the inappropriate nudity.

Clearer aims and regulations for art were created at the council of Trent to justify the church’s position in the use of art. The efforts coming from this council gave birth to the Baroque style and the Baroque expansion of Rome. Baroque art and architecture soon became a global style as Catholic missionaries and European expansionists took these trends with them to the New World. “The Baroque has been called a style of persuasion, as the Catholic Church attempted to use art to speak of victory to the faithful and to express the spirit of the counter-reformation. By the 17th century, the Church declared the counter-reformation effort a success and celebrated its triumph” (Davies 2007, p. 659).

Baroque painting became more theatrical and emotionally charged. Artists like Caravaggio made the biblical stories come to life, almost making you feel the pain, sweat and heat of the bodies being depicted. Caravaggio’s *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* penetrates your comfort zone, it “crashes into the viewer’s space” (Shama 2007), making you feel it, believe it, and surrender to its truth (Figure 6).



(Figure 6) Caravaggio. *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*. C. 1602. Oil on Canvas 42 in × 57 in Sanssouci Palace, Postdam,, Berlin, Germany.

Architectural renovations were unprecedented during 17th and early 18th centuries. Beginning with Pope Paul III the counter-reformation popes widened, paved and straightened the roads of Rome to accommodate for pilgrimages moving statues and obelisks to function as markers. These popes founded schools of art and commissioned some of the greatest architects such as Michelangelo, Carlo Maderno and Bernini to resurrect Rome again as the eternal city. Michelangelo was summoned almost immediately after the Council of Trent to renovate the Palazzo Nuovo (Campidoglio), which was the center of civic government. The statue of Marcus Aurelius (which at the time was believed to be of Constantine) was moved to the Campidoglio's piazza. This statue was to legitimize the papal desire to control the affairs of state much as the Roman emperor Constantine had during his reign. Michelangelo also was urged in 1547 to finish St. Peter's and erect the central dome.

McGregor, in his book, *Rome from the Ground Up* (2005), speaking of the increased activities, states:

Gregory XIII and Sixtus V did even more. Like Nero and his architects after the Great Fire, these adventurous popes and their planners were able to inscribe their visions of renewal on a portion of the Roman map that was virtually without landmarks. They laid out new roads linking the most distant parts of the city; they sponsored the organization of new neighborhoods along these arteries; and, most importantly, they reclaimed the imperial heritage of the control and distribution of water.... The Roman emperors gave their citizens public theaters and public baths, but above all they gave abundant water as a way to show both their generosity and

their power. The popes followed the emperors' lead in this, as in so many other things, and the reconnection of the aqueducts and the reintroduction of the various water supplies into Rome was always the occasion for monumental celebration.... The Trevi fountain was the first public fountain in Rome since antiquity. It reminds us of the Roman triumphal arch and stands for a miracle, "both a theatrical tour de force and a serious and subtle restaging of Moses' striking of the rock in the desert, and it sets the emotional stage for the papal palace a short distance away" (p. 243).

Early Modernism; Art, Science and the Roman Church

By the late 17th and 18th centuries Rome used multiple tactics and fronts in their efforts. They wanted to keep up with science by renewing the calendar and be acquainted and up to date with the new world through the Jesuits, who were aggressively obtaining lands and faithful in expanding the Catholic empire. With the idea of conquering the world, maps and accurate map making became central. Christopher Marlow once wrote, "Give me a map; then let me see how much is left for me to conquer all the world...." (Harley 1989, p. 277). This new emphasis is visible still today as there are entire rooms in the Vatican frescoed with maps from floor to ceiling.

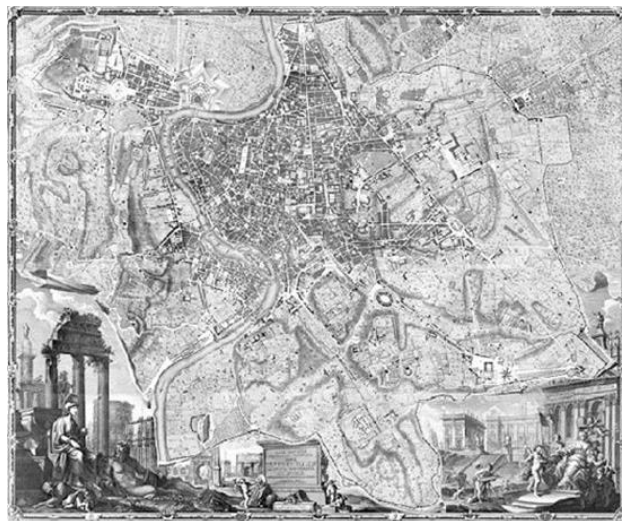
Maps and Nolli's Pianta de Roma

The new technology of printing made it possible to reproduce copies of maps. It became especially fashionable for British travelers to Rome to acquire maps and exhibit them back home. These trends of collecting large maps are made visible in paintings as seen in the background of Vermeer's *The Art of Painting*. To accompany these maps from Rome, artists would sell booklets full of *vedute* (the Italian word for "Scenes") of different tourist vistas of Rome. If maps served as an architectural plan, the vedute were the elevation drawings, but accurate maps were hard to come by. The techniques and scientific approaches were still being developed, but all this was changed by one man – Giovanni Battista Nolli.

At the height of imperialism, the papacy finally obtained the first accurate map of Rome. Giovanni Battista Nolli's *Grande Pianta di Roma* is described today as a "watershed" in the history of cartography (Ceon 2005). In contrast to the early medieval period when maps were concerned with ideology and faith shaped geographical understanding (Miller 1998, p. 35), new trends in map making emerged in the Renaissance (Ballon and Friedman 2007, p. 680). The rediscovery of Ptolemy's historic study, entitled *Geographia* and Vitruvius' *de Architectura* in the 15th century had a major impact in map making (Pinto 1976, p. 35). With the rise of modernism and its concern of objectivity and precision, Nolli's work became possible yet remained inextricably woven with the

ideology of the religious establishment. This is evident in the juxtaposition of the objective and scientific map and the surrounding *images*, imbedded with their intended, powerful message.

We now turn to Nolli's map and delineate aspects of the religious and political undertones in his map of Rome by describing the symbolic nature of the architectural features and images, which support and provide the foundation for the map. In this culmination of bridging past with present, ancient with modern, Roman imperialism with Papal Christian universalism, Nolli's map can be also seen as an attempt to reestablish Rome's global supremacy (Figure 7).



(Figure 7) Giovanni Battista Nolli. *Grande Pianta de Roma*. C. 1748. 12 copper plate engravings, altogether 69 in × 82 in.

An accurate map of Rome was desired by Clement XII and Benedict XIV, who wanted to engage in the administrative reorganization of the city. The papal desire for administrative reorganization included changes in the division lines of the different neighborhoods. The choices Nolli made for the rendition of the map were influenced by his experience with the *Forma Urbis Romae*, an ancient Roman map that had been discovered by archaeologists. His modern surveying instruments are shown on the lower right of the scene. Nolli was a tedious record keeper who even indicated true north from magnetic north in the compass flower, making his map the first of Rome that is oriented north. His map was so accurate that today if you superimpose Google earth satellite images over his map, they correspond perfectly (nolli.uoregon.edu/preface.html).

With the printing press, mapmakers were able to reproduce maps and hoped to sell them. For this, the artists used etching on the copper plate as the main technique. The task of bridging the gap between ancient and modern Rome and reestablishing its preeminence as the religio-political capitol of the world was achieved here by the work of Nolli the surveyor, and Stefano Pozzi the artist for the images (Pasquali 2004, pp. 59-62). A study of the illustrations surrounding the *Grande Pianta* testifies to the ideological overtones intended for its production, tracing lines of continuity between past and present. What follows is a description of the map.

The Church Triumphant; The Map and its Message

On the bottom, beginning from the left side we see the temple of Castor and Pollux perhaps the most ancient, recognizable, and central feature of the Roman Forum. This temple was an icon of ancient Rome and was in the center of current archaeological speculations of his time. The temple of Castor and Pollux was built in commemoration of the Roman victory over the legendary Tarquinius Superbus (Coarelli 2007, p. 74). This commemorative temple became one of the earliest locations where the senate would convene, “as politics and religious matters were closely bound” (Watkin 2009, p. 14). While the artist frames the bottom left side with the dilapidated pillars of this Roman temple, the right side echoes the idea on continuity by the basilica of St. John Lateran recently renovated by Clement XII (1731-36) – his name clearly etched on the façade. Both buildings are thematically connected, as the Lateran was the seat of the Bishop of Rome where affairs of church and state were inextricably woven, and it was the first building erected after Constantine’s battle at the Milvian Bridge (Figure 7a & b).



(Figure 7a)



(Figure 7b)

(Figure 7a & b) Giovanni Battista Nolli. *Grande Pianta de Roma*. C. 1748. 12, Two details of the copper plate engravings. Size all together 69 in x 82 in.

If we continue to read the image from left to right we must return to the porphyry sarcophagus next to the temple of Castor and Polux, and behind Roma, where it originally contained Agrippa's ashes. Later Pope Leo X moved the porphyry sarcophagus on to the gable of the Pantheon's lobby. Clement XII (Corsini) moved the sarcophagus to its final resting place, naming his family chapel in the Lateran Basilica (Zänker 1973, p. 325). Above it, Clement the XII adds a dedicatory inscription which reads: CLEMENS XII PONT. MAX. ANNO (V) CHRISTO SALVATORI.... This title clearly connected him to past Roman emperors. The title Pontificus Maximus held religio-political power in its role of bridge (PONT.) divinity with humanity. The sarcophagus also served as a reminder of the inevitability of death in contrast with the continuation of Roman history through Christianity. The porphyry sarcophagus does not show any sign of decay. The uncovered sarcophagus is a reminder of Christ's resurrection, reaffirming the rebirth of ancient Rome through the Church (Borsi 1993, p. 400). Emphasis is given to Pope Clement XII because the map was initially commissioned under his rule, but upon his death, Benedict XIV also took interest in the map. For this, the central dedication honors him with an inscription inside the Antonian column base, which had been recently found by archaeologists (Zänker 1973, p. 325).

Continuing from the left we see the seated colossal statue of Roma. Frequently two prisoners would flank Roma on each side as seen in the drawings by Fontana of the Palazzo Senatorio. Prior to 1720 the group was strategically placed at the terminus for the triumphal papal processions restored during the Renaissance (Aikin 1980, p. 587). Like the emperors of Rome, the popes would proceed through the city on a white horse and specifically pass under important triumphal arches. This was where the procession would end and according to the antiquarian Cesare Ripa in his *Iconologi*, the standing Roma represented the military aspect, but the seated figure was triumphant (Aikin 1980, p. 588; Ripa 1618, p. 275). In an inscription connected with the victorious Roma we read “Future Rome, vicar for Christ [between] God and man who was able all alone to subdue so many kingdoms [and] men is the same who now also fights for Christ, lo triumphant; she was the law for the kings of the conquered globe” (Aikin 1980, p. 590). Nolli chooses to portray this Roma yet without prisoners. Instead the reclined god Tiber is at her feet (Borsi, 1993, p. 402).

This particular Tiber statue (See figure 7a) was very popular after it was discovered in 1512 during excavations. During the Napoleonic invasion the statue was taken to Paris, where it lies today at the Louvre. The Tiber holds symbols of the benefits it bestowed upon the Roman people, a cornucopia and a broken oar, symbolic of abundance. It is ironic that the artists chose to depict the grand colossal statue of the Tiber cracked and broken, a deliberate portrayal of the eroded Belvedere Tiber next to a preserved Roma communicates the timelessness of her divine purpose. Artistic license is also taken as the original group of statues is broken and Remus and Romulus are separated from the Tiber. Remus and Romulus are eroded and large parts of their bodies and heads are missing completely.

The Youthful Ecclesia as the Victorious Rome

The strongest symbol of papal, universal power is the image of the Ecclesia (modern Roma/Church) on the bottom right – the youthful and living counterpart opposite the ancient statue (See figure 7b). The custom of using a youthful Roma can be traced back to 17th century maps by Tempesta and Giovanni Basita Falda but never in the complex allegorical program introduced here (Zänker 1973, p. 325). Stefano Pozzi was probably influenced by Maratta and Pannini favored artists of the time. Pannini was a great *vedutista* of his time and portrayed a young and beautiful Roma surrounded by putti (Borsi 1993, p. 450; Denison et al. 1993, pp. 6-8).

The cherubs in Nolli's map are holding different Constantinian emblems allegorical of Christian victory. The one to her left holds a Chi-Rho flag and shield in a triumphant posture in front of the basilica of St. John Lateran. The great Lateran was historically the first basilica donated to the church by Constantine and became the papal residence and governing seat. It is considered the mother church and "according to Eusebius of Caesarea, first biographer of Constantine, it was an *ex-voto* erected after the Emperor's victory in the name of Christ at the Milvian bridge" (Magnuson 2004, p. 54). Constantine is also referenced on the opposite side through his triumphal arch behind the statue of Tiber.

The youthful Ecclesia is being crowned from above with the papal triple tiara. She holds St. Peter's keys in her left hand above the globe offered her by the cherub. Since the fall of Constantinople the papacy viewed itself as the last Christianizing force and World Monarchy (Aikin 1985, p. 214). The elaborate crowning ceremony was accompanied with a procession through Rome (Ceen 1977, pp. 141-142). The regal significance of the triple crown is accentuated by the triple cross placed slightly below to its left. Small cherubs cascade down the left side of Ecclesia where a seated cherub holding a mitre rests below. There is a deliberate exchange of hats and according to Innocent III, the tiara or regnum was the badge of papal temporal power as the mitre of spiritual power (Beck 1913, p. 331). The mitre is thus closer to the shepherd's staff as the world is closer to the regnum tiara descending upon the Ecclesia.

The Palazzo dei Conservatori rises above the Capitoline hill in the background, the same palace that Michelangelo was commissioned to renovate in order for the popes to usurp temporal secular power. This influential building served as the meeting place of the Roman senate. The church had long usurped the power of the senate since the beginning of the 16th century and much of the counter-reformation artistic frescos rendered make precisely that point. A ceiling fresco of prominence in the Palazzo entitled "The Triumph of Christianity Over Idolatry" reminds us of Nolli's map showing ancient and modern, pagan and Christian Rome (Aikin 1985, p. 208). The 18th century imperialist Church was relentless in clinging to its temporal power, but in the end, it had cost the church greatly, depleting its financial resources and its ultimate influence. Absolutist governments in France, Portugal, and the Habsburg Empire were solidly established. As Krautheimer observes, "The fate of the world was decided in Paris and Madrid, and perhaps Vienna, not to mention London, Amsterdam and Istanbul. But it was no

longer decided in Rome” (Krautheimer 1985, p. 141). By the time of Clement XI in the early eighteenth century, the papacy was economically, politically, and militarily weak.

The Falling out and Prophetic Wound

Antagonistic feelings towards Rome were evident in the middle of the 18th century with the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Portuguese empire, Spain, France, the two Sicilies, and Parma, culminating finally with the French Revolution (Mörner 1966, pp. 156-164; Van Kley, 1975).

According to Christopher Johns (1993), the church clung to “privileges, monopolies, prerogatives, and immunities claimed for the Holy See for generations. Rome’s tenacious refusal to compromise on any principle precipitated the conflict in which the Church emerged the loser, a process that culminated in the humiliation of Pius VII by Napoleon” (p. 4).

The effects of Luther’s 1517 protests in the town of Wittenberg rippled to such consequences that it affected every aspect of life as we know it on both sides of the religious fence. In hindsight, Luther’s influence was a watershed in art, music, literature, the German language and culture, as well as religion. Through propaganda, art and architecture, the church desired to impose itself as dominating the earth and these artistic evidences remind us of the prophecy in Daniel 8:11 that the “small horn grew in power and it set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host.” The kind of power the church was aiming to obtain as evident in the art reminds us of Revelation 13:5-8 when it states: “It was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months ...” and “he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation, all inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast.”

The time this image was made was prophetically not yet ripe for the church to obtain the kind of universal power it desired. Instead, the boasting eventually culminated in the tensions that led to the fatal wound of Revelation 11:3. In 1798 the pope was placed in prison by Napoleon’s general Berthier, and the power the church once enjoyed during the Baroque period received its “fatal wound” (Revelations 13:3).

Iconoclast Modernism and Post-modernism

We know through prophecy that someday soon the world will look to Rome again for resolving the major global crisis. This might happen because of the world’s moral and spiritual bankruptcy. All we need to do today, to

see this desperate state, is to look at contemporary culture and art (Scruton 2009, p. 184). The world has faced iconoclasm before but never to this scale. Since the rise of secularism from the French Revolution onward, artists have been searching for the new role for art and have gone down an existentialist path. Because of the postmodern lack of belief in the possibility of any utopian vision, artists have destroyed past concepts of beauty, balance and aesthetics. They have searched for a new kind of freedom in the breaking of rules. Art no longer is a window into another world but rather a rude awakening into ours with little prospect of the future. Trying to find truth outside of religion has directed artists into the world within. In our existentialist society, art has turned introspectively towards the artist's body, mind, personal fears, nightmares, and their general experiences has played a central role. The two great World Wars pushed artists into depicting despair. In Dadaism and Surrealism, artists concluded that if a better world was not possible through human reason, which had caused mass destruction, perhaps it would be found in a self-induced state of paranoia. In this iconoclastic frenzy artistic standards and craftsmanship have been leveled and we have become aesthetically numb. Ugly is the new norm because beauty is deemed irrelevant. Standards are relativized, and the definition of art has been muddied. The only certainties we can have is that we cannot be certain and that art must be free. This lack of standards and goals is typical of the pluralistic world we live in today. It is best expressed in non-representational art and abstraction since it cannot be fully understood and can be open to multiple interpretations. Art serves no purpose outside of itself and this is viewed as the truth about our intellectual, rationalistic and empiricist condition. Speaking of our lost ability to judge what is and is not aesthetical, Scruton (2009) states: "The desire to desecrate is a desire to turn aesthetic judgment against itself, so that it no longer seems like a judgment of us ... by using culture as an instrument of desecration they neutralize its claims: it loses all authority and becomes a fellow conspirator in the plot against value" (p. 184).

Should Christians Artists Engage?

As Christians, how should we engage in the art world? There should be a desire to bring hope and love to the world. As an artist today, I should also consider what the destruction of the standards and aesthetic experience has done to our minds. I should try to somehow to engage but attempt to improve the outlook and bring hope back to the discussion. This position might be at times counter-cultural because we live in an anti-

Christian age in which absolute truth is shunned and hope considered naïve. Yet a Christian visual voice should penetrate the halls of art history once again. Despite the anti-Christian world we live in many are still looking to believe and Christian artists can model the faith they profess through art and their lifestyles.

Moderation, Multi-media, and its Effects

Today with new forms of media there is an overstimulation of our visual sense, and it is unrestricted. What power do images, seen or imagined, have over our brain, nervous system, appetite, body and especially our spirit? How should Christians engage and respond?

The Bible speaks of the power of our thought life in Proverbs 23:7: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Images play an unprecedented powerful role in our thought lives. Because the contemporary pace of life is so fast, images are used to get the message across in the most efficient way. Speaking of the torrent of images and messages our brain absorb, Gitlin states: “The most widespread, most consequential speed-up of our time is the onrush in images.” We see more images, good and bad alike, than ever before in history and they come at us with such speed that it dwarfs our capability to discern between good and bad. Television, cell phones, and billboards are all vying for our attention simultaneously. In the *Christian & Postmodern Theology Examiner*, an article was published in June 2010. Its title is telling: “The Lost Art of Thinking in Today’s Entertainment-Saturated, Image-Driven Postmodern Society.” The author, Edwin Vargas, examines people’s inability to distinguish between the real and the imagined, good and bad, fact and fiction, intellectual and emotional. He continues to say that we have lost the ability to think abstractly (Vargas 2010). Satan has broken the barriers of our minds, and now he is flooding it with his images. Christians need to turn the torrent of negative media around and bring positive images into the mix to counterbalance the negative effects it can have.

Richard Restak, a neurologist, writes in his book, *The New Brain* (2003), that studies indicate that this overstimulation is the cause such syndromes such as “modern nerves”, ADD and ADHD (p. 50). Imaging techniques show that the brain “literally changes its organization and functioning to accommodate the abundance of stimulation forced on it by the modern world” (p. 38). He further states that, “regarding violence today scientists are pretty clear.... Thanks to the work of Grafam, Jakic, and others, we know that watching violence-or even just imagining it- reduces the functional activity of those parts of our brain that are normally enlisted to inhibit violent

impulses. For example, people with antisocial personality, a disorder associated with increased aggressive and violent behavior, have an average 11 percent less gray matter in their prefrontal cortex compared to healthy people. When such a person looks at vivid depictions of violence he is already compromised in terms of his ability to control his violent impulses....”

Aesthetic Sensitivity and the Mind

The good news is that we can choose what we look at. According to research, “If we shut off these images we actually become more sensitive to the suffering of those around us” (p. 63). The neuroplasticity of the brain allows for neurological paths to be formed on almost a daily basis and recovery to occur. The media can guide our minds to what is good and beautiful. Neuroesthetics is another relatively new field that looks at what beauty does to the brain. Aesthetics is a unitary phenomenon; in other words, it involves the sensorimotor, cognitive and emotional elements of our brain. The emotional connection will depend on the individual’s background.

When there is an awakening towards goodness, we build and protect our minds from addiction and we become more sensitive to God’s prompting and to listening to His will. Christian artists are called to use this powerful tool to produce and work towards true beauty in order to help others, lifting up the human spirit, promoting images of truth, hope and peace. Paul’s writing to the Philippians said: “Whatever things are true, whatever is noble, whatever is just, pure, lovely, whatever is admirable or of good report – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – meditate on these things” (Phil 4:8).

Positive and Deep Beauty

God’s love of deep beauty is evident all around us, especially in nature. When I speak of “deep beauty,” I mean to say that it is not void of complexity of design, meaning, and truth. Currently, health centers and hospitals are spending enormous amounts of money to build arts programs. Research has proven the positive effects on the brain for healing through beauty. One particular research study indicated that patients who engaged in art making, or music therapy, reduced the need for sedative drugs. In reporting upon the results of one study. Anita Boles calculated that the cost reduction in pills for senior citizens would be about eight cents each per day. She estimated that if we were to calculate the current senior citizen population in the U.S. on sedatives, the savings,

because of art, could be up to four million dollars per year. This has been called the art infusion program, or positive distraction.

Conclusion

Praise God that in His word we find protection for our aesthetical standards and minds. According to Davidson, God cares so much about aesthetics that He reserves almost fifty chapters in the Pentateuch for instructions of architecture and artistic detail (Davidson 2000, p. 204). Paul, writing to the Philippians, said: “Whatever things are true, whatever is noble, whatever is just, pure, lovely, whatever is admirable or of good report – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). Christian artists must preserve their minds for God and bring mental peace and health to a visually numbed world. We must act out this world view – “the world view which gives men and women the truth of what is” (Shaeffer 2005, p. 254).

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