

2014

2014 Proceedings: Music and Art Instruction

Southern Adventist University School of Education and Psychology

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Recommended Citation

Southern Adventist University School of Education and Psychology; McCoy, John W.; Ashton, Bruce; Hasel, Giselle Sarli; Archilla, Marcella; Livanos, Nicholas; and Tilstra, Doug, "2014 Proceedings: Music and Art Instruction" (2014). *Reynolds' Chair Symposium Proceedings*. 3.

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Reynolds Symposium

2014 PROCEEDINGS

Music and Art Instruction:

Promotion of Religion and Values or
Just an Added Value to Higher Education?



Proceedings of the
Reynolds Symposium: September 19-20, 2014

**Music and Art Instruction:
Promotion of Religion and Values or
Just an Added Value to Higher Education?**

John W. McCoy, Reynolds Chair and Compiler
November 2014

Southern Adventist University
Department of Education and Psychology

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PREFACE

The first annual Reynolds Symposium, titled “The Next Generation: Will It Be Adventist? Mining [Qualitative] Data from the Adventist Connection Study” was held September 21, 2013, on the campus of Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee. The Symposium was hosted and organized by the Reynolds Chair, under the oversight of Southern Adventist University’s School of Education and Psychology. The Reynolds Chair is a position established by Maurine Reynolds in honor of her parents, for the purpose of providing quality research and instruction in the area of religion and values at Southern Adventist University.

The second annual Reynold’s Symposium was held September 19-20, 2014, again on the campus of Southern Adventist University. The theme was “Music and Art Instruction: Promotion of Religion and Values or Just an Added Value to Higher Education?”

The topic of the Symposium was addressed by the School of Art and the School of Music. Friday evening, Bert Coolidge presented a history on the Reynold’s family interest in education and religious values and how this chair came to be in the School of Education and Psychology.

This was followed by a presentation by Professor Bruce Ashton entitled “Is Singing a Methodist Hymn an Adventist Thing to do?” This set the stage for the weekend presentations. His conclusion, which can be found in the following papers, simply stated is that there is spiritual power in Christian hymns, regardless of where we find them. Sabbath morning the music department continued its presentations with music provided by students, and a flute octet that provided three classical numbers through-out the program. Then the art department stepped in with a presentation on art from two professors’ perspectives, a current student perspective, and a former student perspective who is now working in the field of art.

Professor Giselle Hasel presented a paper entitled “Teaching Art From a Christian Perspective”, a perfectly matched topic for this themed Symposium. Her conclusions that can also be found in the following papers, were that in God’s Word, we can find purpose. And in her teaching, she directs students to find appreciation in art that has a purpose, and to focus on excellent and praiseworthy art. In that endeavor, we might bring hope to this world.

We were especially privileged to hear from one of our current art students, Marcella Archilla, who spoke about her struggles in transferring her beliefs from mind to canvass. She described her struggle to find a theme for her senior project and found assurance from Professor Hasel that her art can provide a step in the right direction for the observer. This was a powerful presentation from a very mature student at Southern.

Professor Nick Livanos presented his art work on Fire. He related it to his early experiences in academy, then his movie-going credits, ending with Spider-man by asking the question, “What can Spider-man teach Christian Artist?”. You will have to read his proceedings in the back of this printing. His conclusion is that art can lead us to a closer relationship with Christ if we nurture healthy artistic relationships.

Professor Livanos invited a former visual arts major who created a video on child abuse. His artistic abilities were recognized by not only all those in attendance, but also by various cinematography organizations across America. His message, abuse happens and we must not have a silent voice. He used his artistic skills to send a powerful and poignant message. The audience reaction was silence and I am sure some self-reflection.

In closing, Professor Tilstra from the School of Education and Psychology brought it all together from both Schools, Art and Music, and encouraged us to see the beauty in art and song as gifts from God. These gifts are to be nurtured and encouraged in our students and in we adults as well.

I express my sincere appreciation to Burt Coolidge for his foresight and leadership in providing for the direction of the Reynold's Chair. I am thankful to Scott Ball and Randy Craven, Deans of the School of Music and the School of Art, respectively. Many thanks also, for the tireless work of Thiffany Reynoso for her work in putting together the collection of proceedings from each presenter. I am also thankful for the students who provided special music and song service. Thank you to all who attended this annual event. I pray that you were blessed by what you experienced.

John W. McCoy, Ed.D.

Reynolds Chair

September, 2014.

ART, MUSIC, AND RELIGIOUS VALUES

Bruce Ashton

Professor of Music

Southern Adventist University

I imagine one could construct a fine 32-hour Master's degree curriculum on that subject! For a weekend seminar, it's a rather daunting prospect, especially when art and music are two realms in which every man is his own authority about what art even *is*, what music *is*, and how he is going to let either one affect him. Rather than address "music" as a complete domain, we shall focus this evening on the particular branch of music most likely to influence the believer's religious values directly. We shall hope to see that Christian hymnody is a powerful resource, one that can be an active agent in shaping belief and experience. *[Prayer]* And in order to study Christian hymnody, we need to begin with poetry.

Enjoying poetry is a fairly esoteric sport in twenty-first-century America. In a straw poll of the students in a class that I am currently teaching, fewer than 30 percent of my respondents said that they ever read poetry for pleasure. The word "poem" is, of course, broad enough to cover a very wide range of styles and formats. At one end of the spectrum we might place the typical greeting-card jingle, intended to be altogether disposable and eminently forgettable. Works at the opposite end of the range may be so abstract and overly nebulous as to make understanding difficult. In between, there are verses of great beauty and power, in which the creative medium both heightens and deepens the profound truth that inspired the writer to begin with. As an example, let us begin with the work of Henry Vaughan, a seventeenth-century Welsh poet who expressed his understanding of "The Incarnation, and Passion" in this way:

Lord! when thou didst thy selfe undresse
Laying by thy robes of glory,
To make us more, thou wouldst be lesse,
And becam'st a wofull story.

To put on Clouds instead of light,
And cloath the morning-starre with dust,
Was a translation of such height
As, but in thee, was ne'r exprest;

Brave wormes, and Earth! that thus could have
A God Enclos'd within your Cell,
Your maker pent up in a grave,
Life lockt in death, heav'n in a shell;

Ah, my deare Lord! what couldst thou spye
In this impure, rebellious clay,
That made thee thus resolve to dye
For those that kill thee every day?

O what strange wonders could thee move
To slight thy precious blood, and breath!
Sure it was Love, my Lord; for Love
Is only stronger far than death.¹

Is such a verse *theology*? Does it contain theology? Does it present theology? Most of us probably think of theology in terms of rational discourse: proposition, argument, explanation and affirmation. Surely there are assertions enough, and interpretations enough, in Vaughan's text; but on top of the thought-based understandings, there is also a layer of emotional appeal, and a further layer of aesthetic charm. Do these extra elements in any way further the theological content? Do they enhance it, stifle it, distract from it, illuminate it? While we would not expect that all theology ought to be made to rhyme, can we not suggest that rhyming verse is nevertheless one appropriate medium for serious thinking about God, about truth, about the Lord's Passion and our salvation?

One of our contemporaries, the Congregational pastor and hymnwriter Brian Wren (ten of whose lyrics, by the way, appear in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal), offers this intriguing and rather comprehensive description:

¹ Vaughan, Henry, "The Incarnation, and Passion" quoted in *A Sacrifice of Praise*, 2nd edition, ed. James H. Trott (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2006), p. 248.

"Christian theology is done when anyone attempts,
by artistic skill and creativity,
the interplay of intellect and imagination,
and/or the methods of reasoned enquiry,
to grasp, know, and understand the meaning
of God's creating, self-disclosing, and liberating activity
centered and uniquely focused in Jesus Christ."²

Ah, but perhaps it is not "theology" we are looking for, but rather some celebration of a very personal religious experience. Something has happened to us, or we want something to happen to us, that will touch us more closely in the heart than in the mind. The sense of wonder is a wonderful thing, perhaps more amenable to poetry than to reasoned prose.

We might not expect a frustrated and violent little girl from Alabama, profoundly deaf and totally blind, to ever discover that sense of wonder; but Anne Sullivan succeeded in liberating Helen Keller's utterly amazing mind. In the process, Beloved Teacher helped her student to develop levels of perception and sensitivity that vie with the senses the rest of us take so much for granted. Perchance they even, at times, surpass us?

The word of God came unto me,
Sitting alone among the multitudes;
And my blind eyes were touched with light,
And there was laid upon my lips a flame of fire.

I laugh and shout for life is good,
Though my feet are set in silent ways.
In merry mood I leave the crowd
To walk in my garden. Ever as I walk
I gather fruits and flowers in my hands.
And with joyful heart I bless the sun
That kindles all the place with radiant life.

I run with playful winds that blow the scent
Of rose and jasmine in eddying whirls.
At last I come where tall lilies grow,
Lifting their faces like white saints to God.
While the lilies pray, I kneel upon the ground;
I have strayed into the holy temple of the Lord.³

² Wren, Brian: Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), p. 364.

Would that such a depth of reverence might seize *our* minds and hearts, whether we visit the temple of the Lord in structures of brick or marble, wood or canvas—or where, indeed, the lilies lift their faces like white saints to God.

Poetry has yet another special gift to offer us. The concise, sometimes terse, manner of writing often produces highly-memorable aphorisms—guiding concepts to help us develop our Christian walk.

Counsel and instruction may somehow be more palatable when served up with a bit of charm, as in these words by Elizabeth Rundle Charles, a nineteenth-century English writer.

Is thy cruse of comfort wasting?
Rise, and with thy brother share.
And through all the years of famine
On its bounty ye shall fare.
Love Divine will fill thy storehouse,
Or thy handful still renew;
Scanty fare for one will often
Make a royal feast for two.
For the heart grows rich in giving;
All its wealth is living grain;
Seeds, which mildew in the garner,
Scattered, fill with gold the plain.
Is thy burden hard and heavy,
Do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden;
God will bear both it and thee.
Numb and weary on the mountains
Wouldst thou sleep amidst the snow?
Chafe the frozen form beside thee,
And together both shall grow.
Art thou stricken in life's battle?
Many wounded round thee moan;
Lavish on their wounds thy balsams
And that balm shall heal thine own.
Is the heart a well left empty?
None but God its void can fill;
Nothing but a ceaseless fountain
Can its ceaseless longings still.
Is the heart a living power?
Self entwined, its strength sinks low;
It can only live in loving,

³ Keller, Helen, "In The Garden Of The Lord," quoted in *A Sacrifice of Praise*, 2nd edition, ed. James H. Trott (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2006), p. 702.

And by serving love will grow.⁴

After the Creator Himself, of course, Adam was (predictably) the race's first poet. Was it not a poetic challenge to come up with the right sound that would fittingly identify each of the creatures spoken into being by the breath of God? And how casually we read his rapturous primal love song:

"This is now bone of my bones,
and flesh of my flesh:
She shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of man."⁵

And ever since, humans have toyed with words, played games with words, molded them and tweaked them and braided them together in ingenious ways. Even if "poetry" to us means scansion and rhyme, where to the Hebrew mind it meant parallelism and subtle restatement, God's people have engaged this art in the service of praise and prophecy, of dirge and diatribe. Something like forty percent of the Old Testament is composed poetically. Many of those verses (particularly the Psalms) were, of course, sung.

Indeed, what is a hymn but a poem wearing an extra layer of clothing? — a garment of music which, if it is shabby, can spoil the effect of the words, or—in a better case— by its elegant simplicity may deepen and enrich the impact of the truth being sung. Reasoned, codified theology (such as Henry Vaughan's lines) and one's daily personal religious experience (musing with Helen Keller in the temple of the Lord) and practical instruction in Christian living (such as Elizabeth Charles offers) are all components of our Christian walk. Why should we not wish to use the richest and most effective means to enrich our souls? Why should we not seek out the most perceptive and persuasive insights of earlier gifted disciples to nourish our hearts and inform our minds?

Can *singing* actually do all that? Is *singing* really that powerful?

⁴ Charles, Elizabeth Rundle, "Is Thy Cruse Of Comfort Wasting?" quoted in *A Sacrifice of Praise*, 2nd edition, ed. James H. Trott (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2006), p. 542–3.

⁵ Genesis 2:23, KJV.

Singing, at first glance, seems like such an *ephemeral* thing. If Oscar Hammerstein II was right, that "a song is no song till you sing it,"⁶ then the song only really exists *while it is being sung*. To be sure, there may be some notation somewhere (possibly even in multiple copies), composed of little black spots on 5-line staves, but until a real flesh-and-blood person obeys those instructions, the song is only an abstraction, and a fairly useless one at that—not very decorative, certainly not nourishing! One of my favorite hymns suggests almost a riddle on the subject. I would like you to sing with me the first song on your handout and see whether, by the end of the third stanza, you are as bewildered as I. *[singing]*

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven
Feed me till I want no more,
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side;
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.
I will ever give to Thee.⁷

⁶ Hammerstein, Oscar II "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" from *The Sound of Music*, 1959.

⁷ Williams, William "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" in *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), No. 538.

The plea of this song is that the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, Who owes us nothing at all,
will supplant my weakness with His strength,
will hold me, feed me (to satiation, no less), cleanse me (in His own crystal fountain),
will be my strength and shield for deliverance,
will calm me in the face of death,
the sting and power of which He has Himself destroyed —

and in appreciation I will what? *Sing Him a song. Sing Him a song? This is any kind of adequate recompense?!* OK, OK, it says "Songs of praises;" yes, it even says "I will ever give to Thee." But if God is really willing to buy in to the plan we just sang, maybe singing has more going for it than we thought. It would seem we should put some deliberate thought into what sort of song we will offer before His throne. What is this singing thing really all about?

Well, since we are building on William Williams's text, he did say that his songs will be "songs of praises." How significant is that qualifier? C. S. Lewis may be able to help us here. In a remarkably perceptive passage printed in his Reflections on the Psalms,⁸ Lewis explains that praising is first-rate evidence—perhaps the best evidence—that we truly appreciate something – anything. Our admiration of a good joke or a spectacular rainbow or a perfectly-seasoned dish, he suggests, can only reach its fullness when we *exclaim* over it, when we *share* what it is that we are so taken with. If that be true, then we have not reached the highest degree in our understanding of and love for God until we have told *someone*—and why shouldn't that Someone be God? And just as friends tell friends they really ought to read thus-and-such a book, or dine at thus-and-such an eatery, or visit thus-and-such a National Park, just so we will find our esteem, our veneration, *and our love* of God enriched and fulfilled by praising Him to anyone and everyone we can possibly tell.

⁸ Lewis, Clive Staples, Reflections on the Psalms (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1958), pp. 90–97

So it is not only for God's sake that He delights to hear our praises. He knows that we are ourselves uplifted, and our humble awe is most abundantly developed, in the very process of setting forth His glories in songs of gratitude *to* Him and hymns of praise *about* Him.

Indeed, the whole process builds on itself in a most remarkable way. "It is a law of nature," Ellen White wrote, "that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that thoughts follow words. If we would give more expression to our faith, rejoice more in the blessings that we know we have,—the great mercy and love of God,—we should have more faith and greater joy."⁹

To expand the subject just a little bit more: I recall a certain church board meeting [many miles from here and a great many years in the past] in which an esteemed professional music-school administrator made a fascinating observation. "When my daughter comes downstairs in the morning," he told us, "I can make her sweep the floor; I can make her wash the dishes. I cannot make her sing." I submit God Himself could not make her sing—nor can He make you sing. The incentive for singing must be awakened, invited, solicited, but never coerced. And for exactly that reason, God must take a special delight whenever you *do* sing, because that "call to song" has sprung up inside you!

In a delightful book called The Singing Thing,¹⁰ John Bell sets forth 10 reasons why people sing, including "Because we can," "To express emotion," "To express words," "To tell stories," "To exercise our creativity," and "To give of ourselves." In this last-mentioned chapter, Bell points out that every human voice is unique; therefore every time we sing, we are giving something that *no one else* on earth

⁹ White, Ellen G.: The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), pp. 251–253.

¹⁰ Bell, John: The Singing Thing (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2000).

can give. Ellen White not only notices the same, but tells us that God pays attention to that very detail: " Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked with our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christlike life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls."¹¹

Shall we try it out, giving something absolutely unique of ourselves?! *[singing]*

The Lord in Zion reigneth,
Let all the world rejoice,
And come before His throne of grace
With tuneful heart and voice;
The Lord in Zion reigneth,
And there His praise shall ring,
To Him shall princes bend the knee
And kings their glory bring.

The Lord in Zion reigneth,
And who so great as He?
The depths of earth are in His hands;
He rules the mighty sea.
O crown His name with honor,
And let His standard wave,
Till distant isles beyond the deep
Shall own His power to save.

The Lord in Zion reigneth,
These hours to Him belong;
O enter now His temple gates,
And fill His courts with song.
Beneath His royal banner
Let every creature fall,
Exalt the King of heaven and earth,
And crown Him Lord of all.¹²

We have already affirmed that theology can be done in verse. This may be a suitable time to introduce two further bits of evidence that we are not alone in our opinion. The first is drawn from a volume

¹¹ White, op.cit., p. 100.

¹² Crosby, Fanny J., "The Lord in Zion reigneth," in Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), No. 7.

bearing the impressive title, "A Collection of Hymns, for the Use of the People Called Methodists." In the Preface to that 1780 publication, John Wesley wrote:

It [this Collection] is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea, to illustrate them all and to prove them both by Scripture and reason; and this is done in a regular order. The hymns are not carelessly jumbled together, but carefully ranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians. So that this book is, in effect, a little body of experimental and practical divinity.

... In what other publication of the kind have you so distinct and full an account of scriptural Christianity? Such a declaration of the heights and depths of religion, speculative and practical? so strong cautions against the most plausible errors; particularly those that are now most prevalent? and so clear directions for making your calling and election sure; for perfecting holiness in the fear of God?

The Wesley brothers understood the publishing of such Bible-based lyrics to be a powerful agent for the conversion of sinners and the instruction of believers. In point of fact, they prepared and issued no fewer than 64 separate collections in a period of 48 years, thereby averaging a new hymn collection *every nine months* for almost half a century!

A more recent book invokes the practical theological usefulness of hymns as "shapers of Christian belief,... [arguing that] Hymns have ... been called 'the ordinary person's systematic theology,' for it is frequently through the words they sing more than the books they read or the sermons they hear that believers are informed and inspired."¹³ Not only are the verses compact and concise, they are more easily remembered because of their structure in stanzas and the poetic devices that they incorporate, including regular scansion and rhyme. Added to the cogent nature of the texts is the emotional potential of a good melody and the fact that hymns are meant to involve the congregation in active participation.

¹³ Reynolds, William J, Price, Milburn, and Music, David W., A Survey of Christian Hymnody, 5th edition (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 2010), p. xvii.

While singing as a choir member at a large Protestant church in Chattanooga, I was struck by the power of a couple-hundred people reciting of the Nicene Creed, standing up every week and declaring: " I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages,..."

Now I am not asking for an SDA creed—I heartily acknowledge the wisdom of avoiding such a statement of belief, confessing instead our complete confidence in the Word of God. However, we would do well to realize that our corporate singing can fill a comparable need *if we are truly thinking about the message we are taking upon our lips*. We even have one of Isaac Watts's Psalm settings that addresses this very choice and reassures us of the breadth of understanding the Word lays before us.

[singing]

Lord, I have made Thy word my choice,
My lasting heritage;
There shall my noblest pow'rs rejoice,
My warmest thoughts engage.

I'll read the histories of Thy love,
And keep Thy laws in sight;
While through Thy promises I rove,
With ever fresh delight.

In this broad land of wealth unknown,
Where springs of life arise,
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,
And hidden glory lies.

The best relief that mourners have,
It makes our sorrows blest;
Our fairest hope beyond the grave,
And our eternal rest.¹⁴

¹⁴ Watts, Isaac, "Lord, I Have Made Thy Word My Choice," (based on Psalm 119:111), in Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), No. 273.

Do we find in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal "all the important truths of our most holy religion"? Is our volume organized with its texts "carefully ranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians"? Do we use our book as "a little body of experimental and practical divinity"?

David Gordon, in his excellent little paperback Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns,¹⁵ describes his deep concern that every time he, as a pastor, selected four hymns for a particular week's service, he was keenly aware of another 146 hymns from his own hymnbook *that his congregation was being deprived of!* Have we ever given thought to what we as a people miss out on, not even having access to Johann Heermann's "Ah, Holy Jesus"? Will you help me remedy that, at least for us assembled here, just now?

[singing]

Ah, holy Jesus,
How hast Thou offended
That man to judge Thee
Hath in hate pretended?
By foes derided,
By Thine own rejected,
O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty?
Who brought this upon Thee?
Alas, my treason,
Jesus, hath undone Thee.
'Twas I, Lord Jesus,
I it was denied Thee;
I crucified Thee

For me, kind Jesus,
Was Thine incarnation,
Thy mortal sorrow,
And Thy life's oblation,
Thy death of anguish
And Thy bitter passion,
For my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus,
Since I cannot pay Thee,
I do adore Thee,
And will ever pray Thee;

¹⁵Gordon, T. David, Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), see pp. 21-23.

Think on Thy pity
And Thy love unswerving,
Not my deserving.¹⁶

Indeed, of what do we deprive ourselves when we are just not willing to put forth the effort to learn

Horatius Bonar's "O Love of God, How Strong and True!" [*singing*]

O love of God, how strong and true!
Eternal, and yet ever new;
Uncomprehended and unbought,
Beyond all knowledge and all thought.

O love of God, how deep and great,
Far deeper than man's deepest hate;
Self-fed, self-kindled like the light,
Changeless, eternal, infinite.

We read thee best in Him who came
To bear for us the cross of shame;
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, our death to die.

We read thy power to bless and save,
E'en in the darkness of the grave;
Still more in resurrection light
We read the fullness of thy might.

O love of God, our shield and stay
Through all the perils of our way!
Eternal love, in thee we rest,
Forever safe, forever blest.¹⁷

There are those who lean very heavily on the Scripture injunction to "Sing unto the LORD a new song."

I submit that far more is involved than looking at the copyright date of a given selection. *Any song* that you have not sung before [such as the one we just shared?] is a new song to you, and completely fulfills the intent of that command. Never mind that Watts wrote it 295 years ago, and the original Psalm is some 3,000 years older yet. Besides, every experience of life changes me, shapes me, molds me in

¹⁶ Heerman, Johann: "Herzliebster Jesu" (translated by Robert Bridges as "Ah, Holy Jesus") in Hymnal: A Worship Book (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1992), No. 254.

¹⁷ Bonar, Horatius: "O Love of God, How Strong and True," in Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), No. 79.

subtle or not-so-subtle ways. Realizing this, even a hymn that I have sung a score of times before may well come to me as a new revelation, a new experience, with new insights that make it indeed a new song in my experience.

Taking a vow, or making a pledge, is a serious matter. Somehow it seems easier to focus all my attention (as I did once) on those two simple words, "I Do," than to attribute the same significance to giving our word *on our solemn honor* in song. There is a hymn that I sang frequently in my growing-up years; apparently not enough others did the same, for the editors of the current hymnal saw insufficient reason to include it. It speaks rather well, however, to this kind of focused commitment; and I would like to share it with you this evening. (For some of you, this *too* may be a new song!) *[singing]*

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.

I would be learning, day by day, the lessons
My heavenly Father gives me in His word;
I would be quick to hear His lightest whisper,
And prompt and glad to do the things I've heard.¹⁸

Are all the noble, worthwhile hymns from long ago? No; nor are all their topics the "present truth" of the Reformers' age. Nor is their language necessarily out of date, confusing to the twentieth-century ear. There is a tremendously powerful retelling in verse of that second meeting of the risen Christ with his disciples, "and Thomas with them," as the King James so carefully notes. I am not sure what melody could successfully clothe these words: let me read them to you.

¹⁸ Walter, Howard Arnold: "I Would Be True," in The Church Hymnal (Takoma Park: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), No. 425.

These things did Thomas count as real:
the warmth of blood, the chill of steel,
the grain of wood, the heft of stone,
the last frail twitch of flesh and bone.

The vision of his skeptic mind
was keen enough to make him blind
to any unexpected act
too large for his small world of fact.

His reasoned certainties denied
that one could live when one had died,
until his fingers read like Braille
the markings of the spear and nail.

May we, O God, by grace believe,
and thus the risen Christ receive,
whose raw, imprinted palms reached out
and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

Thomas H. Troeger¹⁹

Actually, there is no way this one could possibly have been in the SDA Hymnal, even if there were a suitable tune, since it was first published nine years after our Hymnal's appearance. But Christian creative writing is still serving as a powerful medium for theology, right down to our own day.

We inquired earlier whether the SDA Hymnal is organized in such a way as to present, teach, and illustrate all the basic truths that Adventists hold dear. Without attempting to superimpose the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs as an over-arching outline, I would like to suggest a pair of hymns, each of which speaks particularly well to certain doctrines. Sometimes the approach their authors have taken will even encourage us to broaden both our understanding and our practice.

We preach an earnest Stewardship doctrine, and not only [I trust] because it undergirds the financial structures of our church. If the created world represents the completion of a project which God Himself

¹⁹ Troeger, Thomas H.: "These Things Did Thomas Count as Real," from Borrowed Light [© 1994 Oxford University Press], quoted in Wren, op. cit., pp. 370-371.

declared to be "very good," and if God did indeed entrust this flawless environment to the care of our remotest ancestors, it does matter how we treat that over which *we* have been given dominion. Fred Pratt Green, a British Methodist minister whose life spanned the entire twentieth century, is represented in SDAH by no fewer than 15 texts—all of them cogent and thought-provoking. This stewardship text does appear in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, but I have chosen this evening to present it paired with the tune MORNING STAR, written in 1892 by James Proctor Harding. *[singing]*

God in His love for us lent us this planet,
Gave it a purpose in time and in space;
Small as a spark from the fire of creation,
Cradle of life and the home of our race.

Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
Life that sustains us in body and mind:
Plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
Riches undreamed of to fathom and find.

Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
Long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
Long have we wasted what others have need of,
Poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
Ours, as His stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse, and destruction,
Good Lord, deliver us, world without end!²⁰

We believe also that humanity was created "in the image of God." Just what that means has been the basis of many discussions. To the extent that creativity and curiosity and probing into the meanings of things is involved, few statements challenge us more effectively than Catherine Cameron's contemporary hymn. It is also gratifying to note that the musical setting was composed by one of our colleagues from Oakwood University. *[singing]*

²⁰ Pratt Green, Fred: "God in His Love for Us," [©1973 by Hope Publishing Company], in Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), No. 641.

God, who stretched the spangled heavens
Infinite in time and place,
Flung the suns in burning radiance
Through the silent fields of space:
We, Your children in Your likeness,
Share inventive powers with You;
Great Creator, still creating,
Show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of
Since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstasy of winging
Through untraveled realms of space,
Probed the secrets of the atom,
Yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life's destruction
Or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons,
May it challenge us anew;
Children of creative purpose,
Serving others, honoring You.
May our dreams prove rich with promise;
Each endeavor well begun;
Great Creator, give us guidance
Till our goals and Yours are one.²¹

We have endeavored this evening to discuss—and to experience—the spiritual power of the Christian hymn. Poetry, whether or not we feel particularly drawn to it, we can comprehend: it is a verbal art, symbolic, communicative, at times even compelling. Its subtleties, nuances, and surprises wrap its "meanings" in an emotional mantle, inviting a higher level of engagement. To this, we have found, can be added the influence of that most intangible of all God's gifts—music. May your religious commitment be deepened, your spiritual understanding broadened, and your fellowship with your Lord intensified from this day onward through the medium of holy song, is my prayer in Jesus' Name.

²¹ Cameron, Catherine, "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens" [©1967 by Hope Publishing Company), in Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), No. 536. Music by Eurydice V. Osterman.

TEACHING ART FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Years ago when I was at university studying art, students and faculty vigorously discussed the definition of art and attempted to understand the complexities and possibilities of all the diverse answers. These discussions were especially interesting since during the late 1980s and early 1990s the National Endowment for the Arts was experiencing severe public criticism.²² Artists were dragged to court, exhibits were censored, and Christians were up in arms because much of the art was either “anti-Christian” or shockingly immoral. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was accused of funding these artists with tax dollars and many US citizens felt personally assaulted. It came to the point that President Ronald Reagan pushed Congress to abolish the NEA completely over a three-year period within his term of office. While this was never fully accomplished, major funding was lost for the arts during those years for the first time in its history. The Avant-garde was once again confronting culture and continued boldly its post-modernist agenda by pushing boundaries of “freedom” into the realm of shock.²³ It seemed that some artists thought that through “shock” they would numb “old social values” and this process of deconstruction would create new standards and possibilities.

As a young Christian art student these public and academic debates often left me confused. We were pushed to believe that if *anything* achieved “art status” we were not to question, or have any moral

²² Joseph Wesley Zeigler, *The Arts in Crisis: The National Endowment for the Arts versus America* (Chicago: A Capella, 1994); Mark Bauerlein and Ellen Grantham (eds.), *National Endowment for the Arts: A History 1965-2008* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009).

²³ Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).

judgment regarding the art piece. Tolerance and acceptance was expected, because this was art, and artistic freedom was limitless. When I ventured to express my concerns some of my classmates accused me of being socially and religiously conditioned. My Christian value system was limiting my experience with art. They told me that now, in a university setting, we needed to question values and be more “open minded.” I responded by asking if this open mindedness meant giving up values, even biblical values? Isn’t open-mindedness and tolerance itself a value? In the end, much to their surprise, I accepted their advice. I opened my mind to search and investigate deeper into God’s Word in order to find the answers. If God was the Creator of the Universe than certainly the freedom with which He expressed His creativity was open to me as well. His inspiration would become my inspiration. Throughout my experience, God has given me the structure and the foundation for forming a better philosophical springboard for approaching life and art. These opportunities allowed me to think about these questions, and lately I also share some of my conclusions with students who also face the same challenges.

The state of the arts has concerned the church for the last two centuries and many have preferred to shy away from art particularly in the modern and postmodern era.²⁴ They do not understand it or see value in it. But I believe we miss a tremendous opportunity. Art today is more powerful and far-reaching than ever before. Ravi Zacharias, in his lecture entitled: *Mind Games in a World of Images*, said: “first art imitated life, then life started imitating art, but today, life draws the “very reason for its existence from the arts.”²⁵ So today more than ever before we need Christian visual artists with the mental fortitude to maintain their position, while being an influence to shape culture rather than allow culture to shape them.

²⁴ H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1970).

²⁵ Ravi Zacharias, *Mind Games in a World of Images*, Part 1. Accessed September 4, 2014.
<http://www.rzim.org/just-thinking-broadcasts/mind-games-in-a-world-of-images-part-1-of-5/>.

What is Art Really?

Once when in a museum I asked: What is art? A little boy innocently said: “Art is about making beautiful things.” I think this is one answer because visual artists can reinterpret nature in a painting, music, or sculpture. According to Jo Ann Davidson, God cares so much about aesthetics that He reserves almost fifty chapters in the Pentateuch for instructions of architecture and artistic detail.²⁶

Aesthetics in art enables us to have a deep experience of awakening. Historically art has been the expression of life and its most treasured values. In this sense, Christian art can be like worship or an act of re-awakening us towards the Divine. In the case of Bezalel and Oholiab, we know that they were inspired (as prophets were) by the Holy Spirit and interacted with God when following specific instructions on how to build the wilderness sanctuary.²⁷ 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.

Artists are called to minister and praise God through art. Each individual will find his or her unique voice. Ellen White states:

Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.²⁸

²⁶ Jo Ann Davidson, “The Bible and Aesthetics.” Paper presented to the Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship, Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic, March 19-26, 2000, p. 204.

²⁷ Exodus 25:9; 36:2; Philip Graham Ryken, *Art for God's Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006), p. 20; idem., *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), pp. 945-969; Davidson, p. 207.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

Art is a visual revelation of our human thinking. It reflects our spiritual, intellectual, and theological thoughts and aspirations. In that sense philosophy and art are synonymous. Art simply conveys a philosophy or statement about life.

Is Christian Art Limited?

Because our world is diverse the differences in approaches, medium and taste are enormous, the possibilities are immense. Going back to the passage above, notice how Bezalel was inspired “in all manner of artistic workmanship” a statement repeated three times for added emphasis. There is not enough time in a lifetime to explore all the possibilities of how art can be made and mastered. Just think of all the things ever written, words ever spoken, images ever seen, places travelled, natural phenomenon, animals living and extinct, microorganisms, fish of the sea and birds of the sky. The universe was created by God. Its expanse and this world is fodder for artistic interpretation, inspiration and investigation of God’s truths imbedded into nature. It is up to us to rediscover and find the underlying metaphorical parallels to the realities of our lives. These realities can include a balance of conflict and resolution, the cry for justice, exposing suffering, the reality of pain against the backdrop of God’s promises, happiness, restitution, our hopes, aspirations, history, times of war, peace and yes, the power of love, especially God’s love.

When thinking of artistic freedom I always like to remind students of the Garden of Eden. God said: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden. . . .” (Gen 2:16). Do we have any idea how many trees? Were they in the thousands or millions? We have never been told if Adam and Eve ever explored the other trees. There is just one tree that God asked them not to eat from. The only reason that tree was there was because God wanted to test Adam and Eve’s relationship towards Him. The knowledge of good and evil was in breaking the trust between God and man. If our relationship with Christ is deep, it will provide the artist with true freedom to explore far and wide. As a Christian, my art is only limited if my relationship with God is broken. In which case there are philosophical incongruences because I am attracted to worldly trends that go against the philosophy I profess. My art is also limited when it

becomes obsessed with self rather than with God. Existentialism seem to have produced a narcissistic generation that sought only their desires and freedom. On the other hand the true Christian has freedom because there is enough in nature that glorifies God. The Psalmist when He writes, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?” (Psalm 8:3-4).

Philip Graham Ryken in his book *Art for God's Sake* states that: “To be pleasing to God, art must be true as well as good.” 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 portray 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).”²⁹ Nancy Pearcey refers to this Christian approach to life as “total truth” by which she means the idea that Christianity gives a “comprehensive framework for all of life and scholarship.”³⁰

Are All Types of Art for the Christian?

Francis Schaefer once broke it down like this: There are four types of artists: 1) The secular artist that makes secular art, 2) The secular artist that makes Christian art; 3) The Christian artist who makes Christian art and 4) The Christian artist who makes secular art.³¹ This leads us to my next question. Is there a right and wrong in art? For the Christian the answer must be, “Yes.” If there is good and evil in the world and art communicates this worldview, then there must also be good and bad art. Who defines good and bad art? What are the criteria used? Schaeffer elaborates further and explains that the artist

²⁹ Ryken, *Art for God's Sake*, p. 39.

³⁰ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), p. 323; idem., *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010).

³¹ Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1976).

most incongruent with the philosophy they proclaim to be part of, is the most untruthful and unfortunate. “Christian art” should come naturally because of the Christ-like concerns that consume our thought life. Proverbs 23:7 states: “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”

What about generational trends and culture? There is an important German word: *zeitgeist*, which translates as “the spirit of the times.” At different times artists have grasped this “spirit” and expressed it most clearly. Every generation grasps truths often emphasizing one aspect as compared to previous generations. The artist who takes a current trend to its logical conclusion usually becomes well known, because that artist helps us understand the paradigm shift in values for their generation. But each philosophical trend is a mixed bag, for it also contains presuppositions and agendas that may oppose Christianity. It is up to Christians to obtain discernment from Scripture and test all things, holding fast to what is good (1 Thess. 5:21). Often different styles emerge from these shifting philosophical trends. These styles most clearly communicate the values (or lack thereof) for that generation.

Studying art history is rewarding because you can see the results of philosophies expressed visually. It is like feeling the pulse of our world in the context of the Great Controversy. Looking back through time, we see the actions and reactions between generations expressing the emotional impact history has left upon them. Sometimes artists quote each other but more frequently they assert themselves again and again as crashing waves of thought against the shore of humanity. From this point of view, we have a greater perspective in which we find our purpose as we see how God acts in history.

I start my classes with the most basic philosophical questions answered in the Bible starting with the first text in Genesis 1:1 which expresses the when, the who, the what, and the how. Then I remind my students that Jesus is the Creator and that He alone is sufficient to provide us with inspiration and content.³² I speak of the universal possibilities and how the heavens declare His glory. Then I transition

³² Inspiration is a religious term, “a divine influence or action on a person” (Merriam-Webster). The term in Greek that is translated inspiration is “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). When Adam was created in God’s image, God breathed the breath of life, *ru’ach*, into his nostrils and he looked into the face of God. When the prophets were inspired they received their messages from God.

to the theme of art as worship and the relationship between humans, art, and nature. I remind them that when man does not know the Creator his admiration for nature can become adoration. This admiration is part of God's general revelation, but if the true God is not worshiped, art can turn into idolatry. Through art history we observe the friction of admiration, adoration, and idolatry repeatedly. This is evidence of the power of our visual sense mixed with the natural human desire to find meaning. Both our attraction for beauty and desire for meaning was placed in us by God as stated in Ecclesiastes 3:11 "I will put eternity in their hearts." Yet, the decision for proper worship is ours. Jerry Sittser 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."³³ The first five commandments in Exodus have to do with our relationship to God and worship. In His love for us God has a righteous jealousy and forbids the making of other gods through images (Exodus 20:4). Again, speaking of context, we need to understand where the Israelites were coming from. Egypt was bigger than life and we still see this when we visit the Pyramids of Giza. These architectural achievements were and still are impressive well after 4000 years.³⁴

This temple at Deir el-Bahari was the culmination of a ship procession that started at Memphis down the river Nile. The boats were decorated with flowers, sweet smelling incense was burned, priests with their shaved heads, wearing white linen would engage in low chanting and the women would shake their sistrum (which is a tambourine like instrument). At Deir el-Bahari's height the platform, we see full of rubble, would be filled with trees and gardens and the ramps were lined with sphinxes hovering

³³ Jerry Sittser, *The Will of God as a Way of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. **.

³⁴ The Great Pyramid at Giza was the tallest building in the world for over 4,000 years until the Eiffel Tower was completed in Paris in 1889. It served as a resurrection machine, reflecting the powerful ideology of ancient Egypt regarding the immortality of the soul. See James P. Allen, "Reading a Pyramid," in C. Berger, G. Clerc, and N. Grimal, eds., *Hommages a Jean Leclant*, vol. 4, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1994), 5-28.

both sides of the procession. This was an elaborate worship of the soul of the pharaoh who was a man/god and the peacekeeper between the gods and earth. Speaking of this issue, Ellen White says:

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.³⁵

The basis for our philosophy must be carefully found within the Bible because it keeps us sober and focused on God's reality. It gives us clear mindedness, which is so difficult when overwhelmed by the power of our senses. Every other philosophy is based on man or creation, a balance that has been missed throughout history and the arts will reflect that. Here are some examples of how values and philosophy affect art:

1. Highly spiritual and defying the idea of mortality, Tutankhamen's mask and inner coffin are almost entirely made of gold.³⁶ Why is gold the material of choice? Because it is a metal that does not corrode and would preserve the image of the king. Maintaining his image was crucial for it would provide his eternal "soul" or *ba*, a place to inhabit as it travelled back and forth from the underworld.³⁷ The frontality evident in Egyptian art is consistent with their idea of order and eternity.³⁸
2. Why did the Greeks focus so much on the male body? Because their worship involved youthful bodies that needed to overcome challenges by participating in the Olympic games. Strength and beauty were divine virtues seen in man. These games were usually performed in front of the temples and statues of the gods. Their art reflects their values and philosophy.

³⁵ White, *Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1881.

³⁶ On Tutankhamun's mask, see Nicholas N. Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, the Tomb, the Royal Treasure* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), pp. 111-15.

³⁷ On the concept of the Egyptian soul, see John H. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Carol Andrews, *Egyptian Mummies* (London: British Museum, 1984), pp. 5-6.

³⁸ Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, revised and expanded (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

3. During the Middle Ages the church attempted to use art to educate the “unlettered.” These images eventually became icons and Christians for a time thought that the saint being worshiped could be accessed through their image and so prayed to it. The balance was tipped again towards idolatry and the church attempted to deal with it by the banning of images.
4. Eventually with the rediscovery of Greco-Roman thought humanism gained prominence, as seen in Leonardo’s Vitruvian man. The humanism strand that rejected God culminated with the French Revolution (1789). The positive outlook of modern man, eventually lead to the worship of autonomous human reason. Man became the starting point of reality, not God.
5. Italian Futurism, a modern art movement, is a good example of the enlightenment’s positive views regarding then human triumph.³⁹ This movement praised humanity’s ability to create machines, embraced the industrial revolution and the automobile. Boccioni’s sculpture entitled “Unique Forms of Continuity in Space” expresses this positive view of what a machine like man could accomplish.

Schaeffer summarized the Enlightenment dream in five words: 1.Reason; 2.Nature; 3.Happiness; 4.Progress; and 5. Liberty.⁴⁰ These ideals came at a high cost and the kind of happiness that resulted was fleeting and faded as a mirage. Referring to the French Revolution and freedom Ellen White states: “The fatal error which wrought such woe for the inhabitants of France was the ignoring of this one great truth: that true freedom lies within the proscriptions of the law of God.”⁴¹ This echoes John 8:36 where true freedom comes from our Creator: “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

With the coming of the two great world wars, the horrors of the concentration camps and the destructive capacity of the atomic bomb, humanity lost its innocence about reason and the hope for

³⁹ Vivienne Green (ed.), *Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2014).

⁴¹ White, *Great Controversy*, p. 285.

progress in achieving ultimate truth through science and this new attitude paved the road for post-modernism. Raised suspicion of reason combined with Freudian thought, made it so artists turned for answers in the depths of their own subconscious. Dadaist and Surrealist artists resorted to madness and automatism, the act of allowing the art to happen with very little planning or thought. According to Freud, morality and self-restraint suppressed natural human desires that needed to be released. Solving this inner conflict would bring about a kind of inner freedom from the confines of morality. Freud believed that the problems with humanity stemmed partially from the Christian church and the notion of a God.

Andre Masson and, eventually, Jackson Pollock are both good examples of automatism. Modern and postmodern artists, especially after World War II, felt they could no longer believe in beauty. Life was fragmented and many of them became anti-aesthetic. With God out of the picture, as had been already stated by Friedrich Nietzsche nearly a century before, there was little hope for goodness and beauty. This brutal honesty is perhaps what alienated the church from the art world. With time the gap became greater and Christians could no longer relate or understand the recent movements within the arts.

It is unfortunate that at a time when artists were desperately expressing meaninglessness, emptiness, and hopelessness that the church failed to understand. Art after 1945 seems to show us that culture suffered from post-traumatic stress and when it found no peace, it continued to towards oppositional defiant disorder, and we come back to the 1990's and the shock art we began with. I can say now that I understand that these reactions were expressing nihilism, the death of values, and the meaninglessness artists found in their life. Many students fail to understand this and feel pressured to conform to these trends in order to fit in. Other artists give up because they do not fit in. After many years, I can say that I am glad I never lost my values because if I did I would have nothing different to offer the world. What contribution can a purposeless and hopeless Christian make to a hopeless world? We have a responsibility as Christians to be involved in shaping the world of culture around us. We

have to contribute something uniquely compassionate to our fellow human beings who are desperately screaming about the huge void in their lives.

Today I would like to call upon us to employ art for two major reasons:

First, to be proactive in our cultural-social milieu. We must be active Christians and not reactive. Christ has left us in the world that we might be the salt of the earth. Not to be conformed by the world, but by being transformed by the renewing of our mind, we “may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). When Christians sue artists in court they are simply solidifying the chasm between the church and culture. We are missionaries and are responsible for the time we have been allotted on earth to act as ambassadors for Christ in all our forms of communication, whether in the written word, the spoken word, or through art. This responsibility includes being literate in our culture’s current philosophy. While postmodern culture may have rejected the God of Christianity, they have not become less spiritual. Today the museum has become the “new church,” and art the new source of gaining spiritual wisdom. I say this because when I tour students through the churches and museums in New York and Europe the churches are empty and the museums are packed – people are standing in line sometimes for miles to pay entrance fees. If we fail to understand this new reality we will become secluded and irrelevant. Art can be a bridge. It is not easy and as Christians we may face rejection if we remain faithful to Christ – this is to be truly countercultural in today’s postmodern society where there is no truth or meaning. We must proclaim God’s biblical truth in all its complexity, beauty, intelligently and intentionally.

Second, the power of art and media cannot be underestimated. In recent years the secular world has often used its power more effectively than the Church and perhaps this is why we face one of the greatest crises with our young people. There was a time when the Church was the benefactor and steward of the arts, but since the Enlightenment, partly due to the rejection of God, the Church has lost its leading role in the arts. The power of art is so effective that there is even concern from a scientific point of view on the impact of images on our minds. 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. In the journal *Christian & Postmodern Theology Examiner*, the article title summarizes the crisis we face today: “The Lost Art of Thinking in Today’s Entertainment-Saturated, Image-Driven Postmodern Society.” Edwin Vargas examines people’s inability to distinguish between the real and the imagined, good and bad, fact and fiction, intellectual and emotional.⁴² He continues to say that we have lost the ability to think abstractly. Speaking of our lost ability to judge what is and is not aesthetical, Sutton 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.”⁴³ Society has used images to break down the most fundamental moral value system. The flood of images and repeated waves of shock have broken the barriers of our mind. 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.”⁴⁴

Dr. Restak in his book entitled *The New Brain* admits that studies indicate that this overstimulation causes such syndromes as “modern nerves”, ADD and ADHD.⁴⁵ 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

⁴² Edwin Vargas, “The Lost Art of Thinking in Today’s Entertainment Saturated, Image-driven, Postmodern Society,” <http://www.examiner.com/christian-postmodern-theology-in-canada/the-lost-art-of-thinking-today-s-entertainment-saturated-image-driven-postmodern-society> - Accessed on February 24, 2011.

⁴³ Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 184.

⁴⁴ Richard Restak, *The New Brain* (New York: Rodale, 2003), p. 38.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

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. . . .” The good news is that we can choose what we watch and absorb. “If we shut off these images we actually become more sensitive to the suffering of those around us.”⁴⁶ This is the challenge that faces Christian artists. Can we not produce a more hopeful condition by reestablishing biblical values by demonstrating compassion, beauty, and deep love in our art?

Conclusion

Praise God that in His Word we find protection for our minds and direction for aesthetical standards, but most importantly we find purpose. The postmodern idea that it is “all about the journey and not the destination,” Or “all about the process and not the product” simply reveals that there is no destination. As Christians we have a trajectory, a purpose. For us, the process is all about the destination. Do we really believe Jesus is coming soon? Then our art will point others to that reality. Paul writing to the Philippians said: “Whatever things are true, whatever is noble, whatever is just, pure, lovely, whatever is admirable or good report – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – meditate on these things” (Phil 4:8). Christian artists must preserve their minds for God and bring mental peace and health to a visual world, but above all we must bring hope. We must act out this worldview – the world view which gives men and women the truth of what is and is to come. ⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁷ Schaeffer, p. 254.

ART— IN THE PERPECTIVE FROM A FINE ARTS MAJOR

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Senior Fine Art Major

Southern Adventist University

Good morning and happy Sabbath! My name is Marcella Archilla and I am an art student here at Southern. I'm a super senior so I've been around for a while, but God willing, I'll finally be graduating this May with my BFS.

I am a Fine Art major.

I cannot even begin to explain how heavy that sentence is. If studying in my field has taught me anything, it's to never offer up those six seemingly harmless words unless I'm ready to answer, because nobody has any idea what I do. That sentence has haunted me over the past five years bringing with it a barrage of questions ranging from the most popular: "so what do you plan to do when you graduate?" to my personal favorite: "so for exams, do you just sit down and color?"

I became o' to familiar with the look in people's eyes as their hope for my future faded away as I uttered those six little words. And boy have I questioned my future! I've pondered almost every college major, turning each and every one over in my head, weighing my options. But I could never pull away from the idea that art was what I was supposed to do. And it was not until then that I realized it was not going to be easy.

By choosing my major, I was making a very difficult decision. Fine Art is literally defined by dictionary.com as: "a visual art considered to have been created primarily for aesthetic purposes and judged for its beauty and meaningfulness, specifically, painting, sculpture, drawing, watercolor, graphics, and architecture." Created primarily for aesthetic purposes and judged for its beauty and meaningfulness. Not only have you created a job for yourself, working from the ground up, but you will be judged primarily on your skill and your content, which for an artist is essentially the way that you

think. Your morals, your values, your interests. In the art world, and just by secular standards, that's a lot to grasp, but throw religion into the mix and you're looking at an entirely different ball game.

When Mrs. Hasel asked me to speak for this symposium I was incredibly hesitant. Initially my first thought was "absolutely not"! Standing in front of a large crowd is one thing; standing in front of a large crowd to talk about two things I am struggling with is totally different. You see, over the past few years my relationship with God has been nothing short of a mess and the confidence I have in myself as an artist is simply lacking. To combine the two and to try to make sense of them seemed almost impossible at first, but I could not get this inkling out of the back of my head that this was something I needed to do. So I talked with Mrs. Hasel and I started thinking. I thought about my artwork, the direction I was headed, the pieces I had made and those that I have yet to create. I thought about God, about how over this past year He has shown himself in more ways than I could ever have imagined, picking me up from places where I could not find a way out. And then I started to make connections; ones that had always been there but I had yet to notice.

As a fine art major I am required to present a senior show with a grouping of pieces all based around one central theme. I had been struggling with trying to find a theme as my deadline loomed over me, getting closer with every day that passed, stressing me out to my max. And then I realized, why not stress? It's there, every day, every minute of every day, and everybody deals with it. So I had decided to focus on stress, and I went at it with a vengeance for that first piece. But when I presented it, I got very different feedback than I had expected. I was trying my best to focus on other peoples stress, what they experience and how they deal with it, but the feedback I got was to focus on my own.

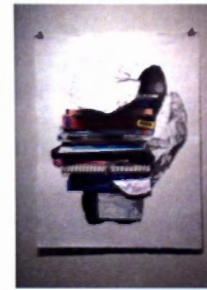
So I shifted the attention to myself and sketched out all of these thumbnails, went through with about half of them, and ended up with what you see (behind me).



“An Apple a Day!”



“I Woke Up Like This”



“Super Senior”

The image of a glove had derived from kickboxing, something I practiced for exercise. The idea is that stress takes the form of the glove, and the punching bag becomes the individual being beat down. Beat down from finances, medical problems, school, physical attributes, time, you name it.

The twist is that the one punching is to be determined. We think about what stresses us out all the time, but we focus less often on how at times we become the stress beating on those around us. So the problem part was there, but what was the solution? And then I started to realize that I needed a solution not just for the purpose of content but for myself, because where I was at was not where I wanted to be, sitting in all of my stress without a light at the end of the tunnel. And I cannot say that it was just one moment, but instead a string of moments, a string of events, that led me to believe that God was real, He loved me, and if I gave Him everything He would really take care of it all, no matter how much I threw in His direction.

Oddly enough, this is where things became confusing. Mrs. Hasel stated earlier that “Christian artists making un-Christian art sends mixed messages about Christianity. “Christian art” should come naturally because of the Christ-like concerns that consume our thought life.” I wanted to show people that there are many different positive outlets for relieving stress, God being the best outlet of them all, but I became so worried that my artwork was not Christian enough. That’s because I did not have the face of God planted smack dab in the middle of all of my pieces that I was not “doing it right”. And I finally came to the conclusion that I was looking at things all wrong. Mrs. Hasel said that “the style that emerges from that trend does not necessarily have to contain the negative content. This is something

each artist must grapple with to see if the style is best suited for the message behind the art.” I am trying to reach a different target audience, a wider audience. I am not saying that artwork that portrays Christ is in any way wrong or less powerful, I am just approaching things in a different way with a different style. A more subtle approach that first focuses on common ground and then offers up an idea, a solution. A choice. I am prodding at a subject that has been thirsty for an answer, and while I am still working on how to present that answer, I am subtly using my artwork to witness.

You see, God works in the most mysterious ways, and He has and always will be there, whether it is in the subtleties of life or the artwork hanging from your walls. He is in everything, whether we like it or not. We just have to choose to see Him, choose to accept Him. And that is what I want to do with my work. I want to present something real, raw, honest, and universal. I want to help others as well as myself to find answers, to find solutions. I want to present that choice. That one answer. That way out. God’s way out. But I cannot force it on anyone, none of us can. But I can lead them in the right direction. Although, people might not want to hear what I have to say, my artwork speaks for me.

You see Mrs. Hasel was right when she said: “Art can be a bridge building tool. It is not easy and we will be rejected, but we must be intentional and engage.” Art changes and it fluctuates and it differs—but it can be such a huge tool to witness, to promote the religion and value we so long to put forth—but in various ways that our strong headed, differential world can understand. So, while art is most definitely an added value to higher education, it is so much more. It can provide a step in the right direction for those searching for something they have yet to find. It can be those unspoken words that work towards uniting us all in Christ. My name is Marcella Archilla and I am a fine art major, confidently creating possibility through positive artwork and the unyielding guidance of the Master Creator and Artist, who is so incredible, and so much better than anything I could ever imagine.

FIRE OR WHAT *SPIDER-MAN* CAN TEACH CHRISTIAN ARTIST

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I begin with one important assumption. I am presupposing the reader's understanding that these are my *opinions*. You may disagree or agree. As brothers and sisters in Christ, I believe we have a much higher calling to unity than to being right. I enjoy a good discussion. But I detest an angry debate. I embrace conversations where all parties listen respectfully; therefore I aim to begin such a conversation here.

When I was younger, my friends and I thought it would be fun Sabbath afternoon activity to blow up an aerosol can on our academy campus. Sometimes you have to be creative when you live in the dorm. The plan was simple enough. Build a small campfire, toss the can in, then run for cover and avoid the shrapnel.

There were five of us. Not one of us took into account the heavy drought that had gripped the landscape. The campfire was built. To my credit, I did attempt to make it safe by adding rocks in a circular perimeter. Ultimately, my efforts proved irrelevant.

We never enjoyed the dazzling pyrotechnic explosion that had leached onto our imaginations because the fire grew into a brush fire. It consumed an area the size of a basketball court, threatened our academic careers with expulsion, and worse; threatened our lives with imprisonment for arson.

Fire is powerful.

If you have seen the movie *Castaway* then you can probably recall a frustrated protagonist, played by Tom Hanks, as he struggles to start a fire on a deserted island. Kneeling in the sand, he furiously wrestles for friction between two dry palm scraps. It has to work. It must work. Because if it doesn't work, he is going to die. Yet his initial efforts fail.

After yelling at his volleyball and only friend, Wilson, he begins again. This time he's more careful. Smoke starts to rise. The scraps are sizzling. And then a tiny orange flame ignites. Hanks sprinkles kindling on top to keep it going. Suddenly the film cuts to a roaring bonfire at night. Tom Hanks laughs and dances around the blaze, proclaiming in a primal voice, "I have made fire!"

Fire is powerful.

Sometimes we *need* it to cook food and to stay warm. It can be the very thing keeps us from death. Yet fire is not picky about how it gets used. Criminals can use it. Five star chefs can use it. Fire is just as willing in the hands of evil as in the hands of good. Fire is dangerous and yet it can be life-giving. So what is fire? Fire is a tool.

The many iterations of the *Spider-man* film franchise are nothing too impressive. They could accurately be described as weak and awkward filmmaking. Still, if you remember the 2002 movie, perhaps you can also remember a short scene in a parked car between Toby Maguire (Spider-man A.K.A. Peter Parker) and Cliff Robertson (Peter's uncle, Ben Parker). Robertson speaks a line that becomes a thematic mantra for the film when he says, "... with great power comes great responsibility." Herein lies a lesson for artists.

Fire is powerful. Fire is a tool. Art is like fire. Art is a tool. It is an ability. And it is a responsibility. In

the hands of evil the power of art can be dangerous. Many Christians already recognize this fact about art. In fact, many Christians are certain of this fact when it comes to my art: motion pictures. But I believe that the medium itself is morally neutral. In the hands of the virtuous, art can be the very thing that inspires, teaches, and connects humans for the sake of the Divine. I submit that the power of art *can* be used responsibly.

In music, if you play certain notes together you can create dissonance or harmony. The listener's disposition can be manipulated by the artist's choices. You have most likely experienced this many times.

In visual art, you can design elements to *intentionally cause* the viewer to look precisely where you want them to look in the composition; to manipulate the viewer. For those unfamiliar with this concept who believe themselves to be free thinkers, consider the Japanese flag. No one who can recall it will say, "Isn't that the one with the four white corners?" No. It's the one with the giant red circle in the middle. The design is so simple. And you look directly where the design tells you to: at the rising sun.

Now, in a written story of any kind, the author uses character and plot to evoke emotion. This is true of fairy tales, memoirs, novels, non-fiction, almost everything you can think of.

In a movie, the filmmaker can do all of the above. Music and visual elements mix with a story to create one of the most potent art forms of all. The power of a good filmmaker is truly vast. Steven Spielberg once described his first experience in a movie theater. He said that the theater reminded him of a church or synagogue. The dimmed lighting and almost reverent silence set his heart in a worshipful place.

Art is powerful.

Mirror neurons have been called the “most hyped concept in neuroscience.” What are mirror neurons? In short, with functional MRI scanning, scientists have observed that some the exact same parts of the brain light up when an animal performs an action, and when the animal merely *observes* the action.

Stub your toe and wince in pain. But watch someone stub their toe and *still* wince in pain. Watch two teenagers tense up before finally interlocking fingers for the first time, and feel their excitement as if it was your own. Feel sad and then start crying. But also, see someone start crying and then feel sad. If you don't believe it, just try searching YouTube for “ouch” or “epic fail.” The resulting slew of pratfall videos will make you cringe. If empathy like that can be achieved in two seconds, what can be accomplished in a two hour feature film?

Art is powerful. With great power comes great responsibility.

I have used the word, “manipulation” several times. It is certainly a negatively charged word. The truth is, if art does not manipulate us, we typically do not think it is very good art. A song has no wings, but if a song “soars,” then it's a good song. But is it “good” in the a more *Christian* sense of the word?

Philippians 4:8 reads “8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (KJV)

Imagine a large Venn diagram with all the characteristics from this verse overlapping slightly. Many Christians consider this verse and assume that it means art must fall in the direct center of the diagram. Art must be all things at once.

For simplicity sake, let us consider a simpler diagram with only two of the Philippians 4:8 attributes. Imagine only two circles overlapping: True and lovely. Apply this second Venn diagram to Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant.

“21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27 The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. 29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ 30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.””

Now remember our second Venn diagram. Would we call the ending of this parable lovely? I should think not. Jesus paints a fierce picture of justice. But is it *true*? Undeniably so. Based on this example, it

seems there might be some artistic freedom when it comes the categories of things one ought to dwell on from Philippians 4:8. We are not restricted to the very center. Rather there is a whole realm beyond the middle that Jesus Himself used to explain the character of God and the kingdom of heaven.

At some point it is wise to ask how any of this can be applied practically in the classroom. Film production freshman consistently bring up questions about content. "What am I *not* allowed to do?" These are not malicious students. None has ever proposed to me a gratuitous sex scene or gushing, glorified violence. They are sensitive to their church and their audience, and for that I applaud them. So what are they really asking? They're asking if all the films they create while they're at Southern must fall into the center of the Venn diagram. "Am I allowed to create work that resides in beauty alone? Mere loveliness?" Or am I required to include purity and honesty, truth and justice as well?"

Shall we censor our students? The best answer I can come up with is: It depends. If a student were to request the opportunity to make a film with an all-nude cast of blood-thirsty zombies that climaxes in the death of Ghandi; censorship sounds appropriate. I am reminded of the first convocation of each year, and the eloquent reminder from President Gordon Bietz, "If this is not your flight, please de-plane now."

But what if a student wants to make a picture about the real horrors of the Holocaust? Racism? Pedophilia? Blanket censorship simply will not do. We must instead inspire students and artists of all kinds to ask the hard questions about their art: If you want to portray child sexual abuse, for example: Why are you doing it? Why do you think it is important? How will you do it? Who do you hope will see this work? Who else might see it by accident? In short, why and how are you using your power?

Christian creators have a responsibility to ask themselves such questions. But Christian patrons of the arts also have a responsibility.

Consider for a moment that when you engage a work of art, you are engaging in a relationship with it. Rather than attempting to discern whether the art is good or bad, pure or polluted, lovely or hideous; determine the nature of the relationship that emerges between it and you.

I recently started reading a book by a well-known actor. This actor holds multiple graduate degrees from a variety of prestigious institutions. He has participated in some tremendous films and rendered equally tremendous performances. There is no doubt that he is very bright and extremely talented. But after a few days with his book, I had to stop reading. The content was bringing me down to dark places. I lost hope for the relationship, and so I *broke up* with the book.

Too frequently we forget that it is possible to walk away from art. We can shut the book. We can exit the theatre. And there are times when it's the right thing to do. If a relationship is not healthy, *break up*.

I picked up a second book. This time it was science fiction/fantasy by another well-known author. The relationship that emerged challenged my intellect, thrilled my emotions, and enlightened my spirit. I courted the book all the way through to the end, then read the sequel, and now I'm on to the third volume in C.S. Lewis's space trilogy. We have a very healthy relationship.

In conclusion, remember that art is like fire: Powerful. Like Spider-man's uncle said, "With great power comes great responsibility. Artists, I urge you to create work that uses your power with intention, whether it falls on the outskirts of the Venn diagram or in the dead center. To viewers and listeners and audience members of all kinds, I implore you to muster the strength to break up with harmful artistic relationships. And to all, I pray you have many healthy relationships with many fine works that lead you ever closer to Christ.

“God as Artist”: Summary of Symposium

Doug Tilstra

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During these past few hours together we have considered music and art instruction at Southern Adventist University. Specifically, we have considered intentionally imparting religious values through the instruction of music and art at Southern. Bruce Ashton challenged us to take more seriously the power of poetry and song, seeing hymns as an offering to God and a force to express, reinforce, and shape our theology. Giselle Hasel invited us to view Christian art as an effective way to offer beauty, hope, and meaning to a postmodern world that has lost a sense of beauty, hope, and meaning. Marcella Archilla demonstrated with her own artwork that a Christian artist can present God’s truth in a subtle approach that leads rather than forces the viewer to a positive view of the Creator. Finally, Nick Livanos presented film as a power akin to fire that can do great good or great harm. Daniel Wahlien’s film on childhood sexual abuse, which was screened for the symposium, powerfully underscored Livanos’ point.

Perhaps the most fitting conclusion to this symposium is to briefly consider “God as Artist” and a few scriptural passage that express that perspective. God is an artist. He creates beauty in the natural world and in relationships. Humans are created in the image of God and we too are artists that may create beauty in those same two arenas- our world and our relationships. Consider the following passages from God’s Word.

God’s artistic skill as Creator of the natural world is presented in countless biblical passages. Possibly the most colorful and poetic is Psalm 104.

- ¹ Praise the LORD, my soul.
LORD my God, you are very great;
 you are clothed with splendor and majesty.
- ² The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment;
 he stretches out the heavens like a tent
- ³ and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.
He makes the clouds his chariot
 and rides on the wings of the wind.
- ⁴ He makes winds his messengers,
 flames of fire his servants.
- ⁵ He set the earth on its foundations;
 it can never be moved.
- ⁶ You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment;
 the waters stood above the mountains.
- ⁷ But at your rebuke the waters fled,
 at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;
- ⁸ they flowed over the mountains,
 they went down into the valleys,
 to the place you assigned for them.
- ⁹ You set a boundary they cannot cross;
 never again will they cover the earth.
- ¹⁰ He makes springs pour water into the ravines;
 it flows between the mountains.
- ¹¹ They give water to all the beasts of the field;
 the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- ¹² The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
 they sing among the branches.
- ¹³ He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
 the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.
- ¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle,
 and plants for people to cultivate—
 bringing forth food from the earth:
- ¹⁵ wine that gladdens human hearts,
 oil to make their faces shine,
 and bread that sustains their hearts.
- ¹⁶ The trees of the LORD are well watered,
 the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- ¹⁷ There the birds make their nests;

- the stork has its home in the junipers.*
- ¹⁸ *The high mountains belong to the wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.*
- ¹⁹ *He made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to go down.*
- ²⁰ *You bring darkness, it becomes night,
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.*
- ²¹ *The lions roar for their prey
and seek their food from God.*
- ²² *The sun rises, and they steal away;
they return and lie down in their dens.*
- ²³ *Then people go out to their work,
to their labor until evening.*
- ²⁴ *How many are your works, LORD!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*
- ²⁵ *There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.*
- ²⁶ *There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.*
- ²⁷ *All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.*
- ²⁸ *When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.*
- ²⁹ *When you hide your face,
they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.*
- ³⁰ *When you send your Spirit,
they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.*
- ³¹ *May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works—*
- ³² *he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.*

³³ *I will sing to the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.*

³⁴ *May my meditation be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the LORD.*

³⁵ *But may sinners vanish from the earth
and the wicked be no more.*

Praise the LORD, my soul.

Praise the LORD.

Turning to God's artistry in the creation of relationships, three perspectives emerge. One perspective is the beauty of the divine/human relationship. For example:

John 13:1-5

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² *The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

John 15:9-16

⁹ *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

A second perspective is the beauty of human/human relationships designed by God to express His artistry in human lives. For example, in romantic relationships:

Song of Solomon 2:1-14

*I am a rose of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys.*

² *Like a lily among thorns
is my darling among the young women.*

³ *Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest
is my beloved among the young men.*

*I delight to sit in his shade,
and his fruit is sweet to my taste.*

⁴ *Let him lead me to the banquet hall,
and let his banner over me be love.*

⁵ *Strengthen me with raisins,
refresh me with apples,
for I am faint with love.*

⁶ *His left arm is under my head,
and his right arm embraces me.*

⁷ *Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you
by the gazelles and by the does of the field:*

*Do not arouse or awaken love
until it so desires.*

⁸ *Listen! My beloved!
Look! Here he comes,*

*leaping across the mountains,
bounding over the hills.*

⁹ *My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Look! There he stands behind our wall,*

*gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattice.*

¹⁰ *My beloved spoke and said to me,
“Arise, my darling,
my beautiful one, come with me.*

¹¹ *See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.*

¹² *Flowers appear on the earth;
the season of singing has come,
the cooing of doves
is heard in our land.*

¹³ *The fig tree forms its early fruit;
the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.*

*Arise, come, my darling;
my beautiful one, come with me."*

¹⁴ *My dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the hiding places on the mountainside,
show me your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.*

Examples of non-romantic relationships include descriptions such as Psalm 133:

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

² *It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.*

³ *It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.*

Finally, a third perspective on God's artistry in the creation of relationships is the rarely considered perspective of divine/divine relationships. Consider, for example, Jesus' description in John 14:8-10 and 15:26-27 of the beautiful and selfless relationship that exists among the Members of the Trinity:

⁸ *Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."*

⁹ *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work...."*

²⁶ *“When the Comforter [Holy Spirit] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”*

These three perspectives on God’s artistry in relationships- divine/human, human/human, and divine/divine- show God’s love of beauty beyond just the beauty of the natural world He has created.

Similarly, human beings, in the image of God, are designed to be artists, creating beauty in the natural world and in the world of relationships. Consider Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15 as God’s original invitation to human artists to create beauty in the natural world.

²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

²⁷ *So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

²⁸ *God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”...*

¹⁵ *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

Consider Genesis 2:18-25 as God’s original invitation to human artists to create beauty in the world of their relationships.

¹⁸ *The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

¹⁹ *Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.*

But for Adam^[1] no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs^[2] and then closed up the place with

flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^[h] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

*“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”*

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God is Artist. Humans, created in His image, are also artists. The beauty of that artwork exists in the natural world and in the world of relationships. God made it so.

A final thought from Scripture is appropriate as we conclude this Reynolds Symposium on music and art instruction at Southern Adventist University:

Psalm 27:4

*One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.*



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