

ABSTRACT

The Art Of Worship: Recognizing The Character Of God In Human Expression

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Worship is a human response to God's revelation of Himself. God's character is not relegated solely to that which is deemed holy and perfect. Rather, God is pleased to reveal Himself even amidst this broken world, and especially in human expression- both sacred and secular. In his *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy, James K. A. Smith posits an outline of desire-forming practices and habits that guide our worship. Using this structure, and drawing on works by Jean Calvin and Augustine, I analyze communal practices that influence the personal habits of three artists as seen in their work. Georges Herbert's *The Temple*, a collection of devotional poetry, reflects the practice of prayer. Georges Rouault's copper plate print collection *Miserere et Guerre* was shaped by the story-sermons of contemporary Leon Bloy. Hozier's secular music album *Wasteland Baby!* mirrors the sent witness of Blues music. Within the work of Herbert, Rouault, and Hozier we can see what the artists' hearts were aimed at. Following these trajectories, we discover glimpses of a God in whom we find rest, who suffers alongside the poor, and who loves a broken world. Through this project I demonstrate that human expression is an appropriate place to recognize the character of God and thus, to be invited to worship.

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THE ART OF WORSHIP: RECOGNIZING THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN HUMAN
EXPRESSION

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To those who have walked with me along the path of wonder.

CHAPTER ONE

The Spiritual Call to Worship

The greatest command is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”¹ We are called to love and worship God with our whole selves. But worship does not begin with us. Our praise is a reply that answers a call. Worship is a response to God’s revelation of Himself. God initiates. Coming close, He opens our eyes to glimpse His face. And when we recognize this revelation of His character, we respond in awe, gratitude, and love. We cannot however love who and what we do not know. How are we to fulfill the command that has been given us? John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* has quite a bit to say about where and how we may receive knowledge of God. “Since the perfection of blessedness consists in the knowledge of God, he has been pleased... [to] manifest his perfections in the whole structure of the universe, and daily place himself in our view, that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold him.”² God’s revelation of His character, what I will call His face, can be seen throughout all of creation. The human body and mind are especially imbued with the image of God. “The human race are the bright mirror of the creator’s works,”³ and “the swift motions of the soul, its noble faculties and rare endowments bespeak the agency of God.”⁴ We are God’s handiwork, and His creative

¹ Matthew 22:37

² Calvin, Jean, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), I.v.1

³ Calvin. I.v.3

⁴ Calvin. I.v.

image dwells in us. Our own agency reflects that creative agency of God. Just as God creates, so do we. It is part of our being which echoes our creator.

God's creation by its nature cannot escape the truth of its creator. Indeed, "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him, and of which he is not the cause; in this way we must learn to expect and ask all things from him, and thankfully ascribe to him whatever we receive."⁵ Similarly, human creation cannot escape the truth of human experience. Everything we do and make will reflect our being. It would be ludicrous to think that a piece of art that revels in the beauty of romance has nothing to do and is in no way related to the human desire for love and intimacy. The creation is tied to the creator. If human art is tied to humanity, and humanity must reflect God, then human art must also be a mirror of the ultimate creator. The fruits of the "swift motions of the soul" house the human desires that yearn for the creator and sustainer. Thus, if we can say that God's face can be found amidst His creation, including the human body and mind, then it follows that we would be able to discover His character within the fruits of His creation's labor, such as art.

As one looks for God's face amidst human expression, it would be impossible to ignore the pain, the confusion, or the struggle we encounter. We cannot deny that we sometimes feel "lonely, in this life of pitfalls and malice."⁶ In this world there is both beauty and darkness. There are things that make our hearts soar and there are things which wrench our guts- things that bring life and hope and things which cause death and

⁵ Calvin. I.i.1

⁶ Rouault, Georges, Plate 5 of "Miserere et Guerre," in *Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre : This Anguished World of Shadows*, ed. Holly Flora (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 58

hurt and sorrow. This is not a world of clean-cut edges, but one of messiness and confusion and chaos. Everywhere we look there is both beauty and darkness. What are Christians to do with this realization? How does this affect our worship-response? This patch of confusing ground, through gracious providence, becomes fertile soil for truths about God's love and creative redemption in the world. We can delve into this intertwining of the world with an eye to worship. We can seek the revelation of God which we trust is constantly pouring forth. God is good and pure and beautiful, as well as patient and merciful with our sin and brokenness. For these things and more He is praiseworthy.

Calvin is not surprised by the brokenness of the world. He states that "nothing appears within us or around us that is not tainted with very great impurity."⁷ And yet he is able also to say that "wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty."⁸ This speaks to the love and creativity of God's redemption. He continues to make beautiful things even in and from a fallen world. He chooses freely to confine himself to the artistic medium of the brokenness we have created. He did not have to. Yet out of His love for us, his people who are but "crazy, brittle glass,"⁹ He tied his hands to our brokenness. Yet in His, the master creator's, hands, even the dark medium is molded into life. Darkness is under the reign of the life-giver and it must bear fruit. This is redemption. Jesus came down and took darkness as a slave. He could have eliminated it, but He chose rather to intertwine

⁷ Calvin, I.i.2

⁸ Calvin, I.v.1

⁹ Herbert, George, "The Windows," in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), line 2

himself with the darkness to overcome it. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”¹⁰ He showed the freedom of His love, even in the face of darkness, in that He allowed it to be free- free to be itself, to be broken if it so desired. He chose to submit to it not because He had to, but because He would not defile His own character by forcing a will. But the darkness could not hold the Living Word. Christ arose! The enemy is now conquered. Darkness is not eliminated but is now a slave-bought, rightfully mastered. Death now wears Life’s livery, now sows the seeds of beauty. Darkness is given the freedom to be what it is, but its harvest is no longer its own. Death remains- for now- but its sting is gone. This is the victory of a creative God that is not threatened nor has any true opponent: not a foe lost, but a servant gained.

What I want to explore is how our interaction with this truth can propel us to worship. As we look out and see this intertwined, in-process, being-redeemed creation, we can receive that thing which we were created for- God’s revelation of Himself. When we worship, we are testifying to the hope of the gospel. We claim that God’s face is still to be found even now. Even in twisted corruption there are remnants of His design and love. The living Word of God is the revelation of God. We have been given the Word in Holy Scripture, and it was made most perfect and clear in the person of Jesus Christ, but that is not all. In the fourth book of his *Institutes*, Calvin discusses the properties and necessity of the sacraments. A sacrament is “an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our conscience his promises of good-will towards us.”¹¹ The sacraments of baptism and eucharist are those material things that Calvin discusses at length- especially concerning

¹⁰ Galatians 3:13

¹¹ Calvin, IV.xiv.1

God's use of them to reveal truth. "Now because our souls are implanted in bodies, he delivers spiritual things under things visible."¹² In the sacraments we see that God is able and willing to reveal Himself through bodily means administered by His children. The material aspect of the sacraments as well as the spoken word which accompanies it are the fruits of human labor. The spoken word is important to Calvin. He specifies that unless the people hear and understand what is being said and done in the sacrament, it has no power.¹³ The spoken word can be seen as a lens of interpretation through which we view the material sign; it is what makes clear the symbol of God's promises. In seeing and taking the bread of the eucharist, without the spoken word to explain, there are many possibilities for analogies and significances one could imagine. The word guides the way we interact with the material sign. The sign and the word, though both important, alone do not make the sacraments efficacious. This is alone the work of the Spirit. "The sacraments duly perform their office only when accompanied by the Spirit, the internal Master, whose energy alone penetrates the heart, stirs up the affections, and procures access for the sacraments into our souls."¹⁴ It is not the specific water, bread, nor cup, which hold power, but the Spirit who is free and dwells in all of creation. Calvin chooses to focus on the reception of the sacrament by the mind and heart which is empowered by the Spirit to strengthen faith. It is the understanding and belief, charged by the Spirit, that is truly efficacious. The physical signs and words are important, but compared to the Spirit, are simply conduits. Alongside the sacraments, Calvin lists bread, sun, and fire all

¹² Calvin, IV.xiv.3

¹³ Calvin, IV.xiv.4

¹⁴ Calvin, IV.xiv.9

as things that are “instruments under which he dispenses his blessings to us.”¹⁵ By doing this, it is clear that Calvin’s description of the Spirit’s work in our hearts through the means of earthly things is not confined to the holy sacraments. We can apply Calvin’s discussion on the work of the sacraments to all those material things, even those put forth by human hands outside of formal Christian worship, that the Spirit uses to reveal truth and enkindle our hearts. Therefore, empowered by the Spirit and led by the hand of the spoken word, we can be drawn to worship when we recognize the face of God in the material of human expression.

It must be admitted that if the spoken word is necessary to make understood a sacrament that is taken weekly, then how much more ought art, variant in source and expression and encountered in unstructured ways, need explanation and teaching? How are we to engage with the world’s art that lays beyond the safety and trust of the church’s walls? Human expression displays glimpses of the holy Kingdom alongside desires for evil. How can we protect our hearts from the chaff of corruption while still gathering the precious grain of God’s revealed character that glimmers in human art? James K. A. Smith, in his *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy, lays out a pattern for how we can be formed by the church’s practices to love the Kingdom of God and be fortified against those things outside the kingdom that call for our desires.¹⁶ Like the spoken word to the material symbol, the church’s worship guides our interaction with and understanding of human expression which the Spirit uses to reveal God’s face, calling us to worship.

¹⁵ Calvin, IV.xiv.12

¹⁶ Smith, James K. A., *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2009); *Imagining the Kingdom, How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2013); *Awaiting the King, Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2017)

In the *Cultural Liturgies* project, Smith is trying to give an answer to the question: what is Christian education? He puts forth that education is not about the intellectual data that one acquires, but rather, the kind of person that is formed. “Too much of our thinking of education... sees education as a matter of disseminating information precisely because it assumes that human beings are primarily thinking things, or maybe believing animals.”¹⁷ To counter this, Smith puts forth a new anthropology. No longer are we to be called *homo sapiens*, who take all the world in through the intellect of the mind, but Smith gives us a new name: *homo liturgicus*. We are “embodied, practicing creatures whose love/desire is aimed at something ultimate.”¹⁸ We are religious animals who take the world in through our bodies and our senses. Leaning upon Charles Taylor’s work, Smith uses the language of the “social imaginary,” which is “an affective, noncognitive understanding of the world”¹⁹ Smith is relocating the center of being from the head into the body, the heart. Rather than thinking of information as sinking down from our minds into our hearts to affect our actions, Smith calls us to imagine the practices of our bodies spreading upward to the seat of theory and doctrine. Smith outlines a pattern for how we come to love the things we do- how we come to desire our kingdom, the vision of the good life we imagine.

“Human persons are intentional creatures whose fundamental ways of intending the world is love or desire. This love or desire- which is unconscious or noncognitive- is always aimed at some vision of the good life, some particular articulation of the kingdom.

¹⁷ Smith, 2009, 18

¹⁸ Smith, 2009, 40

¹⁹ Smith, 2009, 68

What primes us to be so oriented- and act accordingly- is a set of habits or dispositions that are formed in us through affective, bodily means, especially bodily practices, routines, or rituals that grab hold of our hearts through our imagination, which is closely linked to our bodily senses.”²⁰ There are four elements to this. Communal practices, personal habits, the directional nature of the human person, and the target or object of our love. The communal practices are loaded with telos, images of the good life, or kingdom. They form our personal habits which are the fulcrum of our love, aiming our intentional hearts at the imbedded telos. This telos is a picture of what it means to live well and to flourish. It is from this loved, ultimate kingdom that we draw our penultimate, intermediary, goals. Taking this into account, “[Christian education] would become a matter of thinking about how a Christian education shapes us, forms us, molds us to be a certain kind of people whose hearts and passions and desires are aimed at the kingdom of God... In short, it’s going to require that Christian education find its font and foundation in the practices of Christian worship.”²¹ “Counterformation requires countermeasures that capture our imagination and not just our intellects.”²² In order to guard our selves against the misdirections of liturgies aimed at kingdoms other than God’s, we must submit to the liturgical practices of the church, the “counter-formation” that works against the secular formation of the world. This counter-formation does not call for complete abstention from culture however “which would amount to pietist withdrawal from the goodness of creation.”²³ In fact, when engaging with the world, “Christian witness to culture can

²⁰ Smith, 2009, 62–63

²¹ Smith, 2009, 18–19

²² Smith, 2013, 163

²³ Smith, 2009, 209

affirm that even these secular liturgies, with their misdirected desires, are a witness to the desire for God; the misdirections are a sign of perduring structure that we can build upon.”²⁴ In human expression- both sacred and secular, we can still see and be reminded of our desires for God.

With this thesis I aim to demonstrate that human art is an appropriate place to recognize the character of God and thus, to be invited to worship. Using James K. A. Smith’s structure of the formation of kingdom-desires, I analyze the communal practices that influence the personal habits of three artists as seen in their work. Georges Herbert’s *The Temple*, a collection of devotional poetry, reflects the practice of Anglican common prayer. Georges Rouault’s copper plate print collection *Miserere et Guerre* was shaped by the story-sermons of French Catholic revivalist Leon Bloy. Hozier’s secular musical album *Wasteland, Baby!* mirrors the sent witness of Blues music. Within the work of Herbert, Rouault, and Hozier we can see the *telois*, the envisioned kingdoms, that the artists’ hearts were aimed at. Following the trajectories of their love, we discover glimpses of a God in whom we find rest, who suffers alongside the poor, and who loves a broken world.

For each of the artists, I identify a liturgical practice which has shaped the personal habits of his art. Liturgy is not confined to explicitly religious worship, but contains all practices “that do nothing less than shape our identity by shaping our desire for the kingdom- the ideal of human flourishing.”²⁵ Within the church, Smith identifies several categories of liturgy such as gathering, praying, proclaiming the word, confessing

²⁴ Smith, 2009, 122

²⁵ Smith, 2009, 87

the creeds, and being sent as witnesses. I have chosen to align the communal practices of each of the artists with one of the church's liturgical practices because within the liturgies themselves we can find "the shape of the social imaginary that's carried in the diverse practices of Christian worship."²⁶ Put a different way, the very acts of prayer, sermon, and being sent as a witness point towards the face of God. For each of the practices I choose, I will explore Smith's commentary as well as the perspective of Calvin or Augustine. I use Calvin for the practices of prayer and being sent as witness, while using Augustine's work *De Doctrina Christiana* to understand the role of the sermon.

After analyzing the *telo*i found within their communal practices, I then look to discover how the artists have carried the imagined kingdoms into their habits. I identify the postures, characters, and outright desires in the liturgies which have moseyed their way into the habits of Herbert, Rouault, and Hozier's art. Finally, I recognize that the artists' habits become part of the readers', viewers', and listeners' communal practices which shape their own habits and guide their own love. The art can now be understood as a practice working upon our habits. I ask the question: what (or more properly, *who*) is it we will be formed to love? With the work of the Spirit, the answer is God. But each piece of human expression reveals a different angle on the kingdom- a different face of the gleaming gem of God's revealed character. With Herbert we read of a God who is a healer and who offers rest. With Rouault we look upon a God who enters into our brokenness and suffers with us. In Hozier's music we hear the voice of a God who is in love with a broken world.

²⁶ Smith, 2009, 155

Drawing on Calvin's understanding of the sacraments, I argue that liturgical practices are completed in their duties by the work of the Spirit. The Spirit is what presses these signs upon our hearts and consciences. Earlier I asked the question: how can we protect our hearts from the chaff of corruption while still gathering the precious grain of God's revealed character that glimmers in human art? When seeking the evocative face of God in human expression, where is the equivalent to the spoken word which clarifies the significance of the sacrament? Where is the hand that guides us to the knowledge of what we are looking for? This "word" is the body of formative Christian worship. Speaking of the purpose of Christian liturgical worship, Smith boldly claims "our imaginations need to be restored, recalibrated, and realigned by an affective immersion in the story of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself... we need to learn the true Story "by heart," at a gut-level, and let it seep into our background in order to let it *shape our perception of the world*."²⁷ Through the affective story telling of the church's worship, sealed by the power of the Spirit, our eyes are honed to recognize truth and our hearts are prepared to receive that which we have been trained to love. When literal spoken words accompany the Christian sacraments, the *homo liturgicus* is being trained to desire that which is truly lovely. With the face of God carved into our hearts by the Spirit, we then can look out at art, both sacred and secular, and smile at the glimpses we catch of the very same face, like when we see a dearly beloved friend in an unexpected place. These hearts, carved into sifters, allow us to gather the grain and refuse the chaff. The harvest, infused with the Spirit, becomes a sign of the promise of God's good-will towards us, which strengthens our faith and calls us to respond in worship.

²⁷ Smith, 2013, 163. Emphasis mine.

Calvin warns against giving any glory or praise to the means of God's grace, relegating our affection and awe to the *source* of all our benefits alone. "If we ascribe either an increase or confirmation of faith to creatures, injustice is done to the Spirit of God, who alone ought to be regarded as its author."²⁸ Thus, while our embodied, affective, intentional natures respond so well to formative liturgical practices, we must give all the praise and credit of power to God who created them to be so inclined. These practices are means by which God graciously allows us to behold his face. It is truly God's face, revealed by the Spirit through the means of practices which changes the heart and forms it toward the true Kingdom. God's revelation of Himself is truly what changes and forms us. "Our mind cannot conceive of God, without rendering some worship to him."²⁹ We cannot see a true glimpse of God without it tugging at our hearts and responding. When by the Spirit, we truly awaken to the reality of God's character, we are changed. Thus, in art, even secular art, we can be called recognize the revelation of God's character by the Spirit, to respond and worship, and be changed.

I have covered quite a bit of theory and theology in the last several pages. First of all, we are given a divine command to love the Lord with our whole selves- to offer worship with our hearts, souls, and minds. But we cannot even hope to fulfill this command unless God reveals Himself to us, which by his grace he does- throughout all creation, including in the humanity, that being which bears God's own image in part with our creativity. The work of our hands cannot hide from the truth of human experience, which cannot in turn completely obscure the fingerprints of God upon our desires. If we

²⁸ Calvin, IV.xiv.10

²⁹ Calvin, I.ii.1

are to see God in the world, and in the human experience, it may be confusing to realize that there is pain and corruption in the world. There is darkness. How are we to respond to this? We respond with worship. Boldly claiming that God is still present and by the Spirit is still able to rouse our affection with revelation in this mixed bag of the in-between world. The very fact that God is still present to our brokenness reveals his creative power and love for us. God, having created us as embodied creatures, has provided for our material nature by choosing to reveal the promises of his goodwill to us through material things- included but not limited to the sacraments. The Spirit is who truly enacts these things, sealing God's face upon our hearts and drawing us to worship. Calvin still suggests that beyond the material, the Spirit uses as an aid the spoken word as a guide to help us understand the meaning of the signs. We need a guide through the material to discover the manifestation of truth. Analogous to the spoken word present alongside the holy sacraments, the habit-forming liturgical practices imprint the face of God upon our hearts- print the "spoken word" upon our heart as a guide through murky world of human expression. God has chosen to be among even broken things, and to redeem them for His own purposes, but we still need a rule, a standard. James K. A. Smith gives a rich exploration into the role of liturgical worship and an understanding of the mechanics of how we come to desire the kingdoms we love. I will use Smith's structure as a lens through which to look at three different collections of art. My purpose is to discover the revelation of God's character, to seek God's face, and to thus be in awe, to be dazzled, to be overwhelmed by the call to love and worship. I hope to be able to say to my God "when you move I'm put to mind of all that I wanna be. When you move I

could never define all that you are to me.”³⁰ By using Smith’s theory of liturgy, I enforce the idea that art is worship-inducing. In fact, art is unique in that as *material*, it can be a responsorial habit that has been formed and changed by revelatory communal practices that then by the Spirit becomes a communal practice- opening itself up to be a means of revelation for God’s character to others. The worshipful response of art becomes the indwelled revelation calling others to worship.

In chapter two, I begin with the work of Anglican priest George Herbert who writes sacred devotional poetry which focuses on the relationship between God and the Christian soul. Next, in chapter three I consider Rouault, a Catholic layman who prints pictures of the suffering people of this world intermixed with Christ who suffers with them. In chapter four, I round my triptych off with Hozier, a contemporary secular artist from Ireland who sings of a ruined wasteland in which love can still be found and justice hoped for. This is no ambivalent order. We begin kneeling in the church, or rather, in *The Temple*. We allow ourselves to be guided by postures of a trusted clergyman. Then, we step out into the world, and with the faith of a devout Catholic we see the character of Jesus who has stepped out of Heaven. He stands alongside the diverse characters of a story-sermon: the downtrodden and the stuck-up. Lastly, we leap beyond the bounds of religion to hear the hopes and desires of a man who sends a message to the world of the potential of the human voice to call forth justice. Each of these three collections deal with brokenness and pain in some way. They each present a glimpse of how God responds to our pain. Herbert reveals a God who offers healing and rest from our weariness. Rouault offers a God who with compassion dwells with us and suffers too, redeeming it. Hozier,

³⁰ Hozier, “Movement,” in *Wasteland Baby!*. Rubyworks Ltd., under license to Colombia Records, 2019, MP3.

unbeknownst to the fact, sings of a God who is in love with this broken world, and who reaches out to make new beginnings. With the work of these artists, the Spirit can move us to apprehend God's work in this broken world He has chosen to intertwine Himself with in love.

CHAPTER TWO

George Herbert's Temple

As we embark upon this adventure, ready to discover new lands filled with the riches of God's abundant revelation, we begin with George Herbert's poetry. In the practice of prayer, Christians fall at the feet of an all-supplying God. This physical, embodied posture is one that images need, trust, and supplication. Smith notes that we are embodied beings. Our souls are often carried by the strength of our material bodies. In *The Temple*, we will discover that Herbert's language is built upon posture. His use of words provides us with a scaffolding of trust into which we can learn to thrust the full weight of our emotions and pain. Using this structure, we grow closer to a God who is shown to provide, to heal, and offer rest.

George Herbert was priest, musician, and poet. He was born to a large family of on April 3rd, 1593. He was educated at Westminster school and Trinity College, and continued to be involved with the latter. He was second of his class when he became a Bachelor of Arts in 1613, becoming a fellow the next year, later to be a professor of rhetoric. In 1620 he steps into the position of Orator of Cambridge University. He eventually had a turn of career in his life, being called to the collar. He is ordained as a deacon in 1624, and ordained an Anglican Priest in 1633, only three years before he dies of tuberculosis.¹ Herbert lived a rather short life, only about forty years, and yet, he left behind a trove of verses. *The Temple*, published posthumously the year he died, is the

¹ Wilcox, Helen, "Chronology," *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xiii-xv

largest collection of his poetry, he reveals a God who supplies all needs, who listens to, guards, and softens the human heart, and who offers rest.

The Practice of Prayer

One of the liturgical practices of the church James K. A. Smith describes is prayer. According to Smith, “implicit in the very act of prayer is an entire ontology of the God-world relationship.”² God is present and engaged, receives and responds to our prayers, and goes beyond our limited space and time. Smith outlines two categories of prayer: intercessory prayer and requests for illumination. Intercessory prayers pursue a God who has a vision for justice and shalom and who has set His church in the world *for* the world. Requests for illumination and wisdom carry the message that we are in need of and dependent upon God as our teacher. This points to a God who condescends, reveals, and offers to us His truth. He is a God who desires to be known.

George Herbert was practiced in the habit of prayer. In his work of poetry entitled *The Temple* he frequently cries out to God with requests and seeks God’s truth and wisdom. While Smith’s description and analysis of prayer is that of public and communal prayer, *The Temple*’s language is mostly private and inward. The majority of voices used in the collection are singular and the intercession in *The Temple* is most often for the self. God is invited to affect change in the speaker. In the poem “The Reprisal,” the speaker pleads “O Make me innocent.”³ This is a confession of guilt and reveals a desire for

² Smith, James K. A., *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2009), 193

³ Herbert, George, “The Reprisal” in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), line 5

God's cleansing work to intervene. In "Unkindness" the speaker prays "Lord, make me coy and tender to offend,"⁴ seeking to avoid offending God. He displays his awareness of his own injustice in the poem, confessing a poor treatment of Christ that he would never lay upon his earthly friends. There are however a selection of beautiful requests unto God for others, such as in "Love II." The speaker seeks a world justly ordered toward love of God. "Immortal Heat, O let they greater flame / Attract the lesser to it: let those fires, / Which shall consume our world, first make it tame; / And kindle in our hearts such true desires."⁵ The speaker intercedes for the world, noting its fallen state and praying for its healing.

Alongside the presence of intercessory prayer, suits for revelation and illumination are prevalent. "The Elixer" begins with "Teach me, my God and King, / In all things thee to see."⁶ The speaker is asking God to guide his sight and to allow him to understand all things in reference to his Lord and creator. The poem ends by stating that all "God doth touch and own / Cannot for lesse be told."⁷ What has been given unto God takes new and greater meaning. This theme of requesting revelation is shared by the poem "Submission." Rather than asking for sight, here the speaker gives his eyes as an offering and in exchange asks for the guidance of God's hand. "Onely do thou lend me a hand, / since thou hast both mine eyes."⁸ The speaker submits his own wisdom and perception of his earthly circumstances, and in exchange requests God's understanding of his life and

⁴ Herbert, "Unkindness," line 1

⁵ Herbert, "Love II," lines 1-4

⁶ Herbert, "The Elixer," lines 1-2

⁷ Herbert, "The Elixer," lines 23-24

⁸ Herbert, "Submission" lines 19-20

purpose. The poem “Home” begins with the invocation “Come Lord,” followed by thirteen stanzas each ending with “O shew thy self to me,/ or take me up to thee!” The opening line is a petition for God to condescend and be known while the refrain is a plea for revelation, for a glimpse of God and His truth.

Calvin on Prayer: The Gateway to Heavenly Treasure

Smith’s categories of public intercession and request for revelation can be seen in Herbert’s *The Temple* in a personal context. In the third book, twentieth chapter, of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*⁹ Calvin discusses the benefit and privilege of prayer in a more personal way. By looking at the first two sections of book III chapter 20 of the *Institutes*, and Herbert’s poems “Prayer (II)” and “Church-lock and key,” both Herbert and Calvin can be shown to see prayer as the door which opens up to the presence, providence, power, and goodness of God found at the throne of the Father. This treasure room door is locked to us due to our sin and depravity which shut God’s ears. However, Christ’s blood is the key which cries for us and grants us entrance into the storeroom of divine treasure.

“To prayer, then, we are indebted for penetrating those riches which are stored up for us with our heavenly Father.”¹⁰ Here, Calvin expresses prayer as a means of access to the treasures of God. In *The Temple*, “Church-lock and key” is a poem that in an earlier version was entitled “Prayer.”¹¹ Like a room holding precious goods, the

⁹ Calvin, Jean, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), III.xx

¹⁰ Calvin, III.xx.2

¹¹ Wilcox, 241

new title implies an enclosed space, in fact a church. The sanctuary of a church is where worshippers commune with God. The throne of God is represented in that space, as well as the altar on which the gracious riches of Christ's body are offered to us. Prayer is the door which opens up to these spiritual blessings. In "Prayer (II)" the act of prayer is valued because of the access it gives to those parcels of ease, power, and love which "wait on thy throne."¹² Prayer in this poem is depicted as a gateway to heavenly treasure.

Behind this door, there lie gifts of God's presence, providence, power, and goodness. "By calling upon the Heavenly Father's name, "we invoke the presence of his providence to watch over our interests... of his power to sustain us... and... of his goodness to receive us into favor, though miserably loaded with sin." These riches are "treasured up for us with our heavenly Father."¹³ Likewise, "Prayer (II)" praises God for the ease of access He grants, for his power, and for his love. "These three wait on thy throne" and are made available through prayer.¹⁴ Here the treasure room is also described to be the throne room of the Father.

The presence of the three gifts Calvin describes is most akin to the ease Herbert sites in the first stanza of "Prayer (II)." This ease is the free access of God's attention by which He then acts in power and love. The speaker marvels at the "easie quick accesse" and the presumptuous privilege given to human requests that God would listen to and indeed grant petitions.¹⁵ The providence and power listed by Calvin are

¹² Herbert, "Prayer (II)," line 19

¹³ Calvin, III.xx.2

¹⁴ Herbert, "Church-lock and key," line 19

¹⁵ Herbert, "Church-lock and key," lines 1-3

depicted in the second stanza of the poem. It is by God's "almightie power" and "great arm" that the world exists and is sustained and upon which all things depend for their supply. Access to the power that holds the foundations of the world has been given to those who place their full hopes upon Jesus Christ, believing on the authority of his word. Therefore, Calvin instructs that nothing "is set before us as an object of expectation from the Lord which we are not enjoined to ask of Him in prayer."¹⁶ In line 11 of "Prayer (II)" the speaker revels in the comfort that there is nothing we could ask for that could not be provided! The power of God is great and immeasurable. The fountain of Christ is inexhaustible.¹⁷

The last blessing listed by Calvin is that of God's goodness to us. It is this goodwill which allows us to come unto him, "even though miserably loaded with sin." The third stanza of "Prayer (II)" deals with the "unmeasurable love" by which Christ took our sin upon himself to reprove it. He destroyed sin, "which ty'd thy purse" of attention and favor, thereby providing freedom to us. This goodness and love took the sinners' place so that they could be welcomed into throne room of God and his treasure.

This bounty of love laid before the believer leads us to the need for it. The door to this rich storehouse is locked. In "Church-lock and key" the very title implies that something is stored away and that access is limited. The first stanza is a confession of both guilt and of frustration. The speaker's prayers have not been answered. The door implied by the title has been locked due to his sin. His guilt

¹⁶ Calvin, III.xx.2

“locks thine eares,/ And bindes thy hands.”¹⁸ It is this same sin which “ty’d thy purse.” Calvin makes it plain that each person is “devoid of every means of procuring his own salvation.”¹⁹ If the door were not locked, there would be no need of “opening up the treasures of Heaven to us.”²⁰ And yet, it has been opened, for there is a key provided. This key is Christ and his sacrifice. It is Christ “in whom [the Lord] offers all happiness for our misery.”²¹ This is where the imagery of “Church-lock and key” takes full force. For once the speaker confesses his sorry state of sin which has blocked his advances of prayer, he cries “Yet heare, O God, onely for his blouds sake/ Which pleads for me:/ For though sinnes plead too, yet like stones they make/ His blouds sweet current much more loud to be.”²² The pitiful state of the sinful supplicant is given an audience by the blood of Christ. The speaker, standing before God as desperately inadequate, throws himself upon the merit and mercy of Christ, with an expectation that the ears of God, otherwise blocked, will be opened unto him. Not only are his pleas heard, but because the call for compassion is carried by Christ’s blood, the very sins which had silenced his calls now amplified them. This is the transformative miracle of the sacrifice, the metamorphosis of death into life. The frustrated tension the poem began with finds its exhausted release as the speaker relinquishes all efforts and instead clings solely to the blood of Christ. Calvin concludes that “admirable peace and tranquility are given to our consciences” and

¹⁸ Herbert, “Church-lock and key,” lines 1-2

¹⁹ Calvin, III.xx.1

²⁰ Calvin, III.xx.1

²¹ Calvin, III.xx.1

²² Herbert, “Church-lock and key,” lines 9-12

“we rest fully satisfied with the assurance that none of our evils are unknown to him, and that he is both able and willing to make the best provision for us.”²³

A Communal Prayer Practice

Though prayer in most poems may be a personal habit of the speakers, it reflects the inscribing of public prayer on the author’s heart. George Herbert was practiced in the habit of prayer. The Book of Common Prayer had a known and recognized influence in his life. Published in 1559, the Elizabethan Prayer Book ordered and structured Herbert’s daily patterns. John E. Booty notes the historical evidence of this, and draws attention to the effects this liturgical practice had on *The Temple*.²⁴ George Herbert’s mother led the family daily in Prayer Book practices, and while Herbert was at Westminster School and Trinity College at Cambridge the rhythms of prayer were administered.²⁵ In 1624 he left Cambridge and in the same year was ordained as a deacon. “From that time until his death he was bound by vows to abide by the doctrine and discipline of the church, which included Prayer Book worship, the saying of the daily offices, assisting the priest at Holy Communion, and preaching when the need arose.”²⁶ All his life Herbert was immersed in the institutional, communal practices of prayer. These liturgies are exactly what Smith would point to as habit-inscribing carriers of the vision of the kingdom. Accordingly,

²³ Calvin, III.xx.2

²⁴ Booty, John. E. “George Herbert: *The Temple* and *The Book of Common Prayer*,” *Mosaic* 12, no. 2 (Winter, 1979): 75-90

²⁵ Booty, 76

²⁶ Booty, 77

Booty notes that “Herbert understood private devotions in relation to public or common prayer, the former needing the support of the latter.”²⁷

The teloi of these practices, notably contrition and praise, can be seen in the habits of *The Temple*. Booty looks to the first few poems of “The Church”²⁸ as setting a model of contrition and praise for the rest of the collection. These themes are conspicuous throughout. Variations on the word “tear,” just one of the images Herbert uses to symbolize contrition and repentance leading to cleansing and healing, occur 41 times throughout *The Temple*.²⁹ This rhythm of contrition leading to praise “characterizes the spirituality of *The Book of Common Prayer*. ”³⁰ Booty uses “The Altar” as an example of this, but there are many more. A poem revealing Herbert’s high value on contrition is “Confession.” The speaker glorifies the agony caused by concealed sin, seeing this discomfort as “God’s afflictions” which are without purchase in an “open breast.”³¹ Confession drives the discomfort away and leads to pardon. Herbert’s first “Antiphon (I)” highlights communal praise. The chorus cries “Let all the world in ev’ry corner sing,/ My God and King.” In the last stanza of “The Church-floore” a story is told of marble that is stained by sin, yet cleansed with weeping. The last two lines praise the one who designed such a structure that would be cleansed and swept. This progression is from sin, to contrition and cleansing, to praise. In similar fashion, the first four stanzas of

²⁷ Booty, 82

²⁸ The second of the three sections of *The Temple*, in which the majority of poems are contained.

²⁹ Di Cesare, Mario A. *A concordance to the complete writings of George Herbert* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977)

³⁰ Booty, 80

³¹ Herbert, “Confession,” lines 9,19

“Unkindnesse” each confess the care and compassion he shows to his friends, yet not to Christ. In the last Stanza, confession and praise mingle as the speaker points to what Christ has done that no other could fulfill. “My God upon a tree/ His bloud did spill/ Onely to purchase my good-will/ Yet I use not my foes as I use thee.”³²

Habitual Postures and Attitudes

In the poem “JESU,” there are postures of humility, need, trust, hope, and rest. This is the story of a simple child who has dropped a favorite possession, and upon inspection, discovers something new. There is a quality of child-like faith and simplicity. The poem is easy to read and there is nothing crucial to the poem that is hidden or metaphorical. There is a step-by-step, scripted progression as the speaker narrates the search for the “deeply carved” (line 2) corners of his heart. The reader is given pause along with the speaker as he sits to attempt to piece his heart back together. The speaker seems just as surprised as the reader to discover the message revealed amidst the brokenness. There is no great feat of understanding, nor any striving effort to be worthy. Rather, the simple message found in the accessible name of Jesu is enough.

There is a posture of brokenness and need. The heart is scattered about the room and requires repair. The “frame” having been shattered by affliction and pain, it is in need of comfort and solace. Like the women in the parable of Luke 15:8-10 who has lost her coins, the speaker is searching for precious parcels. It is not a dignified and prideful quest, but a thorough pursuit of priceless objects.

³² Herbert, “Unkindnesse,” lines 21-25

The speaker takes us on an unhurried journey of finding the corners of his heart. When he finds all of the “parcels” however, he is hopeful and “instantly” sits down (line 7). He positions himself to give full attention to the task. Sitting is not a stance of agility, power, or energy, but is an attitude of rest. No longer searching, it is in the stillness that he begins to piece together the gift of his broken heart. It is a gift because of the comfort discovered, but one that would remain unopened if not for the “affliction.” sit is the action of one receiving and being served. Recall “Love III” when the speaker is called to sit and receive the meal “You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat” (17).

The poem is also testimonial. Many poems of *The Temple* are confessions to and conversations with God. This is a narration of events, implicitly addressed to the reader. As such, we are called to enter into the story and experience it with the speaker. It pulls us into the postures and attitudes of the speaker in this story of brokenness.

There is a posture of trust and obedience. Jesu’s “sacred name” is carved into the speaker’s heart, and thus has been carved into the speaker’s love. Jesu is the one the speaker trusts and puts first among his desires. He follows this carved name as the guide for the puzzle-putting-together. In fact, as Helen Vendler notes, the speaker sits in order to spell, expecting the discovery of significance.³³ He trusted there to be meaning, and for it to be found in the name, and thus the person of, Jesu. In “Affliction (III)” the first stanza is incredibly reminiscent of “JESU.” In grief his heart would have broken but he “knew that thou wast in the grief/ To guide and govern it to my relief” (2-3). The speaker of both poems trusts that God can be found even in pain, and for the purpose of leading the speaker to “ease” or “relief.”

³³ Vendler, Helen, *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 72, quoted in Helen Wilcox, 401

The poem “The Altar” has much in common with “JESU.” The overlap in words and themes enhances the meaning and understanding of each. These poems can be read together and be seen to comment upon one another. This is not unlike Herbert’s description of the interdependence of Biblical texts in “The Holy Scriptures II.” “Seeing not onely how each verse doth shine,/ But all the constellations of the storie” (3-4). Between the two poems, there are words which are shared or similar, such as “broken” and “broke,” “heart,” “frame,” “parts” and “pieces,” and “name.” There are similarities in imagery as well. In “The Altar” the heart is cut by the Lord’s power while in “JESU,” “his sacred name” is “deeply carved” into the speaker’s heart. In “The Altar,” the speaker states that his Lord fashioned the parts of his heart. He then uses “workman” and “tool,” alluding to crafting and handy-work, such as carving. Taking both poems into account, the heart belongs to the Lord both because it is His creation, and because it has been dedicated in love. In lines 9-11 of “The Altar” the broken pieces of the heart are placed together in a similar way to how the speaker of “JESU” fits the pieces together by spelling them. “The Altar” calls the heart a stone in line six, and the carving of the heart in “JESU” implies a medium of stone.

While much can be gained by reading these two poems together, they also have unique messages apart from one another. There is a posture of confident yet humble offering in “The Altar.” The confidence comes not from the speaker’s pride in himself, but the provision of God alongside the speaker’s need³⁴. This posture of confident offering can be seen in the speaker’s direct address to his Lord, the tall shape of the

³⁴ See Herbert, “The Church-floore” lines 7-9. Here confidence is gentle and is joined to patience, humility, and charity. This confidence leads to praise. In lines 1-2 of “Redemption” the speaker “resolves to be bold” out of state of need.

poem's frame, and the dedication of his heart to praise. Humility is seen in his servanthood, admittance of brokenness, dependence on the Lord even in his offering, and the request for "thy blessed S A C R I F I C E." With the breaking up of the words A L T A R, H E A R T, and S A C R I F I C E, there is a posture of brokenness- not only in the speaker, but also in Christ.

Like many of Herbert's poems, the first line holds an address to his Lord. Many of the addresses are invocation and requests. "Teach me, my God and King,"³⁵ "Lord, who hast form'd me out of mud... Purge all my sinnes done heretofore"³⁶ and "How should I praise thee, Lord!"³⁷ are all such examples. This address however is a declaration of a gift. He is announcing to God that he is ever-preparing a proper offering. In lines 9-13 the speaker declares that the purpose of his efforts of building are to praise God. The speaker does not ask if he may, or ask what ought to be brought. He is stating to his Lord what he intends to offer, boldly. The implication that the speaker indeed has something to offer up contributes to the posture of confidence.

The poem itself is shaped as a vertical, symmetrical altar. It rises up from the bottom of the page. It seems tall and prominent. Its symmetry is pleasing and gives the shape an heir of sound construction. In the first line, the speaker "reares," (constructs and erects) the ALTAR. This description of an ongoing process indicates a rising. It has a connotation of height. The posture of the poem's tall altar-like shape and the rising of the

³⁵ Herbert, "The Elixer," line 1

³⁶ Herbert, "Trinitie Sunday," lines 1, 4

³⁷ Herbert, "The Temper (I)," line 1

altar by the speaker reveal the confidence of one who is sure their offering will be received.

As the altar rises, there is a posture of action and progress. The speaker seeks to praise his Lord by creation and production. This is an attitude which is present in many of the other poems, but is often reproached or tempered. The pairing of “The Thanksgiving” and “The Reprisal” is a clear example. In the first poem the speaker seeks to find deeds good enough to repay God for every act of grace towards him. In the latter poem, he relents his efforts, realizing that there is no way to do enough. In “The Altar” this proclivity toward action does not seem to take over the poem, but is balanced by the humility and need.

Let us turn to those weaker postures which temper the strong. The first of these is announced in the second word of the poem: “broken.” This brokenness cries out in need. It declares its own inadequacy and it requires help. This word “broken” along with the “teares” of the second line allude to scripture, as noted by Wilcox³⁸. “The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.”³⁹ Tears are often associated with repentance and grief over sin in *The Temple*. Weeping cleanses the sin-stained marble of “The Church-floore,”⁴⁰ and in “Holy Baptisme (I)” tears drown sins “as they grow.”⁴¹ This posture of need and contrition speaks to the ownership of guilt in the speaker. The need and inadequacy is his own fault.

³⁸ Wilcox, 92

³⁹ Psalm 51:17

⁴⁰ Herbert, “The Church-floore,” lines 13-15

⁴¹ Herbert, “Holy Baptisme (I),” lines 7-9

The whole clause “cemented with teares” has its own implications. Schleiner notes that there is a pun with an alchemic word “cimented” which has similar pronunciation and syllabic stress. This word means to be “converted to a new state.”⁴² This broken altar is changed by tears of repentance. Taken without the pun, repentance is the mortar which binds the pieces of his heart together. The repentance could therefore be taken to be an ingredient in the altar. With the addition of the play on words, the emphasis is on the healing and unifying properties of the teares. They are no longer simply part of the altar, but are what change the altar from broken to whole. Repentance plays a crucial role in preparing an offering.

There is a posture of humble stewardship and dependence. This altar the speaker has been building may not truly belong to him at all. The speaker refers to himself as a “servant.” The work of his hands does not belong to himself. Even the “parts are as *thy* hand did frame.”⁴³ Even the material he is working with, his own heart, has been created by his Lord. This altar has been set apart for the one to whom it truly belongs and has been protected from the influence of others. “No workmans tool hath touch’d the same.” Like in “JESU,” what is carved marks what is loved. The tools of the world and humanity have not worked their way into the speaker’s heart; his heart has been reserved for the love of God. It is not simply that all other offers have been defended against, “as nothing but/ Thy pow’r doth cut.” Nothing else compares to the work of God, and nothing else can cut through the human heart. This set-apart heart-altar that the speaker “reares” and

⁴² Wilcox, 92, note on line 2

⁴³ Herbert, “The Altar,” line 3, emphasis mine.

offers does not even seem to be his own, or to be crafted by him. The speaker's offering is dependent on the one to whom it is offered.

The presence of humility and dependence are not contradictory to the posture of confident offering, but rather the former grouping complement the latter. The last two lines of the poem are "O let they blessed S A C R I F I C E be mine,/ And sanctify this A L T A R to be thine." This should be reversed. An altar seems a prerequisite for a sacrifice. Yet, the offering the speaker declares he will give must first be sanctified by the receipt of the sacrifice he is to receive. This posture of reversal is greatly significant. The one to whom the altar is given is the one who prepares it and sanctifies it by His own broken "S A C R I F I C E." This echoes scripture. "We love him, because he first loved us."⁴⁴ The speaker then, is humble because he recognizes his need and reliance upon the one who forms and sanctifies his offering; from beginning to end, it has been prepared by his Lord. The speaker's confidence shows a trust and assurance in him, that his Lord will indeed honor the offering He Himself provided and made pure.

The Character of God Revealed

As readers, we join in with the speaker along his story. Our hearts and minds follow the postures of his heart and his body. Our understanding and imagination are being shaped and formed as we participate in the poem. The Prayer Book was a practice of Herbert, and it formed the habits of *The Temple*. In like manner, the readers of *The Temple* pray with Herbert's speakers. This book of poems becomes a book of prayer. Herbert's work of worship becomes part of the communal practice and therefore has

⁴⁴ John 4:19

the power to inscribe upon the reader the habits of prayer. We have been formed by the prayers of Herbert's poems to call upon a God who is kind, worthy, merciful, providing, revelatory, and who desires to be known, who condescends, and who is our sacrifice. These are praiseworthy characteristics. As we participate in these postures, they form us to recognize particular characteristics of God and thus, they reveal the character of God. The postures call us to worship.

In "JESU" we are called to a God who desires humility and child-like trust. This God is personal and leaves a deep imprint in our love and life. He breaks with us, and knows pain well. He is a guide in our brokenness. He gives significance and meaning to our affliction and offers us compassion and comfort. Think of the line from the hymn "How Firm a Foundation" in which God promises to "sanctify to thee thy deepest distress." He is precious and worth pursuing. He can be discovered- not apart from our life, but amidst it and within it. He has something to say to each part of what makes us up, as well as to our whole. Through the story which focuses on the speaker, we are called to emulate the spiritual posture which forms us to love the character of a good, kind, precious, trustworthy, sanctifying, surprising God. We are called into worship of the God whom the speaker loves and implicitly weaves into his own story.

The way that this poem points to God's provision for the speaker's offering is reminiscent of the story of Abraham. This patriarch of the Jewish and Christian faiths was prepared to worship God to the point of great sacrifice, but God provided a ram for the sacrifice. God gave to Abraham the offering which he would give back to his Lord. All that Abraham ended up giving that was his was a willing heart.

“The Altar,” in addition to implying the characteristics of God by the speaker’s postures, also directly testifies to God’s action. God is said to be powerful in His unique ability to cut the hardness of the heart and is shown to be active in forming the speaker’s heart and altar. He is also shown to be initiating and providing by the primacy of His sacrifice and his activity in forming the parts of the heart even before his servant “rears” them. The speaker shows postures of confidence, action, and offering, alongside brokenness, need, contrition, servanthood, and purity as he speaks and serves his Lord. The speaker’s attitudes point toward a God who is kind, worthy, merciful to receive our broken offerings, providing, moved by an honest heart, our master, and the sacrifice which makes us whole.

CHAPTER THREE

George Rouault's Man of Sorrows

After having prayed with Herbert to a kind, merciful God who sends supplication and ease, let our hearts now be stirred with compassion for the poor, moved by the strong invective of Georges Rouault's visual story-sermon. In this chapter I will show how Rouault prints a story, or perhaps a parable, of his own world. He fills it with characters we ought to emulate, and those we should refuse to resemble. God sent Himself to be a part of our story.

Georges Rouault: The Artist

Georges Rouault was known for his shocking art that mocked the proud and revealed the darkness and hardship of the world for the poor and suffering. Rouault was born into the working class on May 27th, 1871 in a cellar as his family sought shelter from the shells being released by government troops from Versailles. As an adolescent he worked as an apprentice with a stained-glass artist.¹ He was fascinated with the windows and the beauty of them. He would spend his lunchtime gazing at copies of great windows.² He was able to enroll in a drawing class in the evenings and found great joy in that.³ From a young age art offered a spark of joy and interest. Perhaps it gave him an escape from the rest of his difficult life in which he described himself as being a “wan

¹ Courthion, Pierre. *Georges Rouault* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1962), 14

² Courthion, 14

³ Courthion, 15

child of the suburban districts of toil and pain.”⁴ Rouault was quite familiar with grief, suffering, and struggle- themes that appear later in his art, and which set his work apart.

In 1892 Gustave Moreau began teaching Rouault’s class at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris.⁵ Moreau took his work very seriously and encouraged artistic independence in his students.⁶ Courthion notes that Moreau must have been open-minded to have so strongly supported Rouault’s art, which was unconventional.⁷ Moreau would take his students to the Louvre to learn from the past masters. He would say “the works that, although they are not perfect, are very unusual: there is sometimes more to learn from them, for they contain a ferment.”⁸

Under Moreau, Rouault entered a painting, “The Child Jesus Among the Doctors,” to the Concour Chenevard.⁹ In it, the twelve-year-old Jesus is shown teaching the teachers in the temple. Jesus is bright against the muddled backdrop and compared to the hunched and dark teachers he addresses. The prize was first given to another work, but the choice was so outrageous to the students at the competition that the decision was overthrown. The second time around, Rouault’s painting was chosen. He was awarded the Prix Chenevard.¹⁰ This was the first work of Rouault to receive much attention. When Moreau died it was very difficult for Rouault, but it gave him an opportunity to evolve

⁴ Courthion, 14

⁵ Courthion, 33

⁶ Courthion, 41

⁷ Courthion, 49

⁸ Courthion, 41

⁹ Courthion, 44

¹⁰ Courthion, 444

his artistic style and sensibility. The shift that Rouault would make is one that Soo Yan Kang ties to the French Catholic revival.¹¹

Rouault first sought out instruction for communion while under the tutelage of Moreau.¹² Moreau was Catholic, and in his art sought to “lead nature back to its spiritual origins.”¹³ Rouault’s faith was strong, evidenced by his continued practice of it even in the face of social and government persecution. A band of artists gathered by the naturalist and symbolist writer Joris-Karl Huysmans near the monastery at Ligugé.¹⁴ They came for the purpose that they would be dedicated and selfless in their art. They “would neither count on money nor on influence. No Bachelor or Doctor degrees, and no specialists; just men who had left behind them what was nonessential in life: degrees, medals, prerogatives.”¹⁵ In 1901 the prime minister, Emile Combs, banned all religious orders, causing 20,000 monks and nuns to leave the country.¹⁶ This little band of artists continued to go and read antiphons and vespers, perhaps even holding services when the monks and priests left.¹⁷

Not only was his faith strong, but it grew and changed. Rouault describes a shift that is reflected in his art. This shift is thought to have taken place around 1902-1905 due to the change that was evident in his work. It is here that Courthion states that Rouault

¹¹ Kang, Soo Yun, “A Spiritual Interpretation of the Vernacular,” *Logos* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2003):108

¹² Courthion, 377, note 3.15

¹³ Courthion, 34

¹⁴ Kang, 2003, 111; Courthion, 78

¹⁵ Courthion, 78

¹⁶ Norwich, John Julius, *A History of France* (New York: Atlanta Monthly Press, 2018), 325-326

¹⁷ Courthion, 80-81

“began to chronicle human misery.”¹⁸ Rouault describes a “most violent moral crisis” and says of himself “I experienced things that cannot be put into words. And I began to paint with an outrageous lyricism that upset everyone.”¹⁹

Around this time Rouault was living “precariously” with other artists in Montmartre.²⁰ Without much fame or money, it was difficult to pay rent and keep up with expenses. Living together gave them an opportunity to have like company and relieve some of the financial pressures. It is here that he “explored the depravation of society” in his art.²¹ He looked out at the community he was in and chronicled the themes of toil and difficulty he observed. The artists would allow the prostitutes to come and warm up from the cold weather in exchange for modeling.²² Rouault wanted to “show their inner states and the realities of their plight as well as Huysmans described them in his novel.”²³ “Rouault adopted neither the attitude of “customer” nor that of the scolding moralist.”²⁴ The type of the prostitute becomes a symbol of society’s corruption of humanity. The prostitute is “the expiatory victim of our society.”²⁵ This view of atoning suffering is an influence of the writers Leon Bloy and Joris-Karl Huysmans, both seen as part of the French Catholic revival movement.

¹⁸ Courthion, 84

¹⁹ Dyrness, William A., *Rouault: a vision of suffering and salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) ,62

²⁰ Courthion, 99

²¹ Kang, 2003, 110

²² Courthion, 99

²³ Kang, 2003, 111

²⁴ Courthion, 99

²⁵ Courthion, 100

O'Doherty, writing on the development of Rouault's art over the course of his life, notes that the early judges painted reveal the "injustice" that "in a terrible paradox glares out of their eyes."²⁶ Rouault's "condemned Man" finished in 1907 gives the same face to the judge and the one condemned. "The reason I gave my judges such woeful faces was doubtless because I expressed the anguish I myself feel when I see one human obliged to judge another. For nothing in the world would I accept the position of judge."²⁷

The clowns with their makeup and costumes and long, anguished faces represent the hypocrisy of society and the weight it lays upon humanity. As Rouault wrote in a letter, "the 'clown' was myself, ourselves... almost all of us... we all wear a 'spangled costume,' but if we are caught unawares... who would dare to claim that he is not moved to his very depths by immeasurable pity."²⁸ O'Doherty understands that Rouault's clowns "[are aware] of futility and the reality of sin... [and] they weep for humanity and for themselves."²⁹

The painting of the prostitutes, clowns, and judges was what O'Doherty calls an "overflow of youthful indignance over the degeneracy of the world."³⁰ This is very different both in subject matter and style from "Child Jesus Among the Doctors" which won him a prize. That early painting reflects the strong influence of Rembrandt, whom

²⁶ O'Doherty, Brian, "Georges Rouault," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 45, no. 177 (Spring 1956): 69

²⁷ Statement made by Rouault to Jacques Guenne, *Nouvelles Littéraires*, November 15, 1924. Quoted in Courthion, 145

²⁸ Courthion, 86

²⁹ O'Doherty, 69

³⁰ O'Doherty, 68

Rouault “fairly worshipped” to the point that his classmates in Moreau’s atelier made a “crude jingle about the source of Rouault’s pigments and style.”³¹ In contrast to the praise he received at the Concours Chenevard, reactions to his first showing of his new art in the Salon d’Automne in 1904 were violent. One referred to his works as nightmares, and another notes “he has a feeling for monsters and gargoyles.”³² Though there was of course further development over the next 54 years, the shift he had made was the only one of such great and quick change. The reactions reveal that there is great continuity. Six years the Salon d’Automne, when he had his first solo exhibit which included 121 painting along with drawings, ceramics, and glazed terra cotta, the collection was called a “collection of horrors.”³³ His style and line, very unique for his time, is described by Jacques Riviere: “Lines that, although they do not follow the form precisely and continuously, nevertheless, by repeating, retreating, and crossing one another, succeed in capturing the form in their countless interlacing.”³⁴ His lines are heavy and dark, and the figures are much more like caricatures compared to the earlier style while under Moreau.

This new style of darkness, haunted figures, and stark, ravaging lines reflect the way he saw the world through his lens of faith. Although he rarely if ever discussed his faith, it can be seen in his art and deduced by his influences. Dyrness describes Rouault’s faith as “unexpressed and yet orthodox, humble and yet morally intense,”³⁵ Lionello Venturi describes Rouault’s faith as full of a sense of evil as well as redemption. Rouault

³¹ Courthion, 38

³² Courthion, 102

³³ Courthion, 147-148

³⁴ Courthion, 148-150

³⁵ Dyrness, 67

was greatly burdened by the injustice of the world. He longed for a society that would recognize its wrongs and repent. The suffering ones of the world were not alone or without hope however. The sufferings of Christ reveal that God has seen the suffering of the world, and has not drawn away, but has come close in compassion. Jesus Christ suffers with and for humanity. Rouault offers a voice for the poor and downtrodden. He weeps with them in their pain and mourns for all of society and its injustice. With the rich and the powerful he is dissatisfied. In a letter to Edouard Schuré Rouault states “the more exalted his position, the more misgivings I have about his soul.”³⁶ Rouault perceived Christ incarnate not only in Jesus’ time with the twelve disciples almost 2,000 years earlier, but also among the people he saw in the markets, in the streets, and in the suburbs. As Kang notes, “Rouault saw no disparity in working on the images of both the sacred and the profane.”³⁷ The images in which there was no figure of Christ were not void of religious significance. Rather, the spirit of God’s justice and Christ’s suffering rested upon the depiction of the hard life of this world.

Rouault had been formed by the practice of sermon and prophecy of the Catholic revival that rose up against intellectualism, positivism, and naturalism. As the 19th century began coming to a close, “spectacular conversion, coupled with the waning of the century’s intellectualism and a staunchly anticlerical republican government, stimulated a most violent reactive revolution in religious literature.”³⁸ Huysmans and Bloy are associated with this. Kang notes how this revival “witnessed a sudden growth of Catholic

³⁶ Courthion, 86

³⁷ Kang, 2003, 118

³⁸ Dyrness, 33

activism and political involvement, as well as a proliferation of Catholic literature written by significant authors who appealed to readers both of and outside the faith.”³⁹

From the years 1914-1918, the years of the Great War, Rouault worked on a project he entitled *Miserere*. Originally meant to contain fifty prints in the first half entitled *Miserere* with another fifty under the title *Guerre*, the final work only contains fifty-eight images. These were prints from copper plates created by Rouault. They are all in black and white, quite different from much of his other work which is full of color. Courthion sees the collection as a “dialogue between the quick and the dead.”⁴⁰ In the collection there are prints that clearly recollect his past paintings of the suffering and the rich, the clowns, prostitutes, and judges, as well as images of Christ, other bourgeois characters, and scenes of death. In response to the war, Rouault spent time meditating on Psalm 51, a cry of David for mercy and cleansing after the rape of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. It is the first cry of this song of remorse and confession that entitles the collection, “miserere,” have mercy. In Rouault’s collection, “between... sin and redemption there came into being a universe peopled with unforgettable creations, scenes, and visions.”⁴¹ In his art, Rouault speaks out of a story of injustice- of a fallen world that is in desperate need. His prints force his viewers to recognize the atrocities, the bleakness, and the pain that comes with life. And yet, these things are not alone. They are also full of a God who suffers alongside- who loves in compassion.

³⁹ Kang, 2003, 108

⁴⁰ Courthion, 190

⁴¹ Courthion, 190

The Communal practice of Sermons

In discussing scripture and sermon in its liturgical use, James K. A. Smith focuses on the role of narrative in forming the Christian imagination and love. Scripture and sermons “[narrate] the *telos* of creation.”⁴² He notes that we begin to imagine ourselves in the story and “its heroes function as exemplars.”⁴³ He also compares the liturgical function of sermon to an Aristotelian constitution which outlines the purposes of the community and sets the measure for virtue. The narrative of scripture used in worship “specifies what the Kingdom (*telos*) of God’s people looks like. It shows us the kind of people we’re called to be.”⁴⁴ Rouault is doing this with the story of Christ, but rather than painting other scriptural scenes, Rouault narrates the story of his contemporary world with Christ and his crucifixion in the narrative. By doing this, Rouault is claiming that Christ and his crucifixion, which occurred almost 2,000 years ago, are still actively engaging with the world. He replaces the Biblical characters with the types of his own society. Rouault is revealing how Christ alters our view of suffering, and through the narrative of *Miserere* offers a purpose of community and sets Jesus as the suffering hero and example. As Jesus condescended to come and suffer with those who were suffering, so should the rest of society. Rouault is enlivening the imagination of what the Kingdom looks like. The Kingdom on Earth looks like Christ in compassion, with hope of the next life made possible by Christ’s sacrifice, for “tomorrow will be beautiful.”⁴⁵ The captions

⁴² Smith, James K. A., *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2009), 196

⁴³ Smith, 2009, 196

⁴⁴ Smith, 2009, 197

⁴⁵ Rouault, Georges, Plate 11 of “*Miserere et Guerre*,” in *Georges Rouault’s Miserere et Guerre : This Anguished World of Shadows*, ed. Holly Flora (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 70

Rouault gives to his plates tie together to tell a story. Some of the sentences are broken up across multiple plates. The tying together of these plates and sentences primes the viewer to interpret the images together and to collect them as pieces of a narrative. This reflects the use of pericopes in liturgical worship. The short sections of scripture chosen and read together from disparate books of the Bible also imply a collection which can form a narrative. Some of the phrases and titles come from poems Rouault wrote. These poems are referenced by Kang in a look into Rouault's influence for *Miserere* from his own earlier works.⁴⁶ The full text of the captions strung together is as follows:

Miserere et Guerre

Have Mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness.
 Jesus despised...
 eternally flagellated...
 take refuge in your heart, vagabond of misfortune.
 Lonely, in this life of pitfalls and malice.
 Are we not convicts?
 believing ourselves kings.
 Who does not put on makeup?
 At times the road is beautiful...
 in the old district of Long Suffering.
 Tomorrow will be beautiful, said the shipwrecked man.
 The hard work of living...
 it would be so sweet to love.
 A young woman called joy.
 In a mouth which was once fresh, the taste of bitterness.
 The upper-class lady believes she holds a reserved seat in Heaven.
 An emancipated woman at two o'clock, sings noon.
 The condemned man has gone away...
 His lawyer, in hollow phrases, proclaims his complete unconsciousness...⁴⁷
 under a Jesus on the cross forgotten there.
 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."

⁴⁶ Soo Yun Kang, "'In the Deep Furrow': Rouault's views on life and suffering" in *Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre: This Anguished World of Shadows*, ed. Holly Flora (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 31-44

⁴⁷ or insanity

Of so many different domains, the noble work of sowing in hostile land.
 Street of the Lonely.
 "Winter, leper of the earth."
 Jean-François never sings alleluia...
 in the land of thirst and fear.
 Here are the tears of things...
 "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."
 Sing Matins, a new day is born.
 "We... were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death."
 "Love one another."
 Lord, it is you, I know you.
 and Veronica with her soft linen, still walks the road...
 "The very ruins have been destroyed."
 "Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world..."
 This will be the last time, little father!
 Man is wolf to man.
 The Chinese invented, they say, gunpowder, made us a gift of it.
 We are insane.
 Face to Face.
 Auguries.
 War, so detested by mothers.
 "We must die, we and all that is ours."
 My sweet country, where are you?
 Death took him as he arose from his bed of nettles.
 "The just man, like sandalwood, perfumes the axe that strikes him."
 "Out of the depths..."
 In the winepress, the grapes were crushed.
 "The nobler the heart, the less stiff the collar."
 "With tooth and nail."
 Far from the smile of Reims.
 The law is hard, but it is the law.
 The virgin of the seven swords.
 "Arise, you dead!"
 Sometimes the blind man consoles the seeing.
 In these dark times of vainglory and unbelief, vigilant is our Lady of the End of
 the Earth.
 "Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 "It is through his wounds that we are healed."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Rouault, 50-165

St. Augustine, in book four his work *De Doctrina Christiana*, discusses the importance of rhetoric in the dissemination of the Gospel.⁴⁹ He argues that truth should not be left defenseless against the smooth and clever words of evil. Rather, the use of rhetoric to communicate “briefly, clearly, [and] plausibly,” is a matter of defending the faith.⁵⁰ The duty of the “defender of the right faith” is to “win over the hostile, to stir up the slack, to point out to the ignorant what is at stake... If the listeners are to be moved rather than instructed, so as not to become sluggish in acting upon what they know... more forceful kinds of speaking are called for. Here what is necessary is words that implore, that rebuke, that stir, that check, and whatever other styles may avail to move the audience’s minds and spirits.”⁵¹ The one who wishes to speak both wisely and eloquently “will surely be of more use if he can do both.”⁵²

Rouault has learned from such literary prophets of the Catholic revival and their sermons. His art has become the sermons of a prophet. Augustine uses as an example of scriptural rhetoric the prophet Amos’ writings. Augustine identifies characteristics and details of style: the roar of invective, matching style of speech to the argument, tying identity to fate, offering something pleasing to the proud only to then call them out by it, using a typed character to familiarize the sin they are blind to, and lastly, the lack of preoccupation with eloquence without abandoning it.⁵³

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (New York: New City Press, 1996), IV

⁵⁰ Augustine, IV, 1, 3.

⁵¹ Augustine, IV, 4, 6.

⁵² Augustine, IV, 5, 8.

⁵³ Augustine, IV, 7, 16.-21.

Based upon Augustine's discussion on the purpose and techniques of giving sermons, and his analysis of the prophet Amos, I will argue that Rouault, through his collection *Miserere*, is printing sermons very similar to the style and in the theme of Amos the prophet.

Augustine states that Amos, "this rustic prophet," attacked the "godless, the proud, the lovers of luxury, who were thereby utterly neglectful of the demands of brotherly love."⁵⁴ This is precisely Rouault's aim. Plate sixteen of *Miserere* is given the caption "upper class lady believes she holds a reserved seat in heaven."⁵⁵ The woman's face is portrayed in profile, while her body is at three quarters, slightly facing the viewer. The lines and shadows of this woman are smoother than in other plates. The strokes seem gentler. Her face is not outlined harshly, but in gradient. The thickest line on her face is the dark mark which closes her eye. This woman lives in comfort. She is beautiful and graceful, clean and healthy. She is blind to the reality of her duty to her suffering neighbors, and falsely comforted by her hope of heaven. This is a woman asleep in her complicity and sin. Her body begins to face the frame, but she turns her head away, refusing to recognize the dignity and need of her brothers and sisters. Rouault attempts with his art to awaken such people to love and care for one another.

Here the artist has offered something more pleasing to the proud the way Amos calls out for those who "sing to the voice of the psaltery. They imagined they had instruments of song like David, drinking wine in goblets and smearing themselves with

⁵⁴ Augustine, IV, 7, 16.

⁵⁵ Rouault, 80

the finest ointments; and they felt nothing for the grinding of their brother Joseph.”⁵⁶ In the print is a beautiful, serene woman, but in context of the collection, her character is recognized as one who has deserted the duty of mankind.

What is it that the woman is called to wake up to? Plate twelve displays a man weary and downtrodden. It is captioned “the hard work of living.”⁵⁷ One of the duties Augustine identified of a sermon-giver was “to point out to the ignorant what is at stake.” The wellbeing of humanity of humanity is at stake. In this print, the man is hunched over and small. His neck is long and bent over. His lines look clumsy and slightly asymmetrical. The furrows of his cheeks are dark and thick. There are lines of concern and worry upon his broad forehead and little indentions above his brows. The weight of the world is on his bare, vulnerable shoulders. This man and his suffering are at stake. In his frame he is alone. No other figure stands beside him. The woman of plate sixteen is also alone. Her tableaux are full of herself and there is no room for others.

Augustine gives another duty- to move rather than to instruct when sluggishness is a vice at hand. Rouault does this with the power and shock of his collection. He focusses on the suffering of humanity and Christ. Rather than giving examples of how to correct, or the way ways in which we ought to live, he pulls upon something deeper, our pity. Not simply the pity for others, but also for Christ who suffered for our sins. While Amos mentions Joseph, and in doing so names a familiar type revered by his listeners, Rouault uses the figure of the suffering Christ. By using Joseph Amos drew his listeners back to a familiar story with many characters, such as the prideful and envious brothers.

⁵⁶ Augustine, IV, 7, 19.

⁵⁷ Rouault, 72

Amos, referring to the prideful among his audience who imagine themselves praising God like David, convicts them of feeling “nothing for the grinding down of Joseph.” Being familiar with the story, they were able to understand themselves in a new light. They were being aligned with the brothers and other characters who had unjustly caused Joseph’s suffering. What was understood apart from them was brought near and familiar through type.

Rouault does this with the image of Christ. In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus teaches of the judgement of the world that “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”⁵⁸ In this passage Jesus ties himself to the lives and experiences of the hungry, thirst, strange, naked, sick, and imprisoned.⁵⁹ Intertwined between images of humanity are images of Christ. Jesus despised, eternally flagellated, forgotten, oppressed, silent, and known by his wounds. Christ and the suffering are placed side by side because their suffering is taken up into the suffering of Christ. The pity owed to Christ is owed to the hurting. The society Rouault spoke to may not have believed in Christ, but they were familiar with him. They knew of the suffering he endured and the love he had for the downtrodden. They knew how to pity him. They also knew of prostitutes, laborers, aristocrats and kings. Rouault used characters they were familiar with to tell a narrative they were not expecting or prepared for- one meant to move them through pity. Rouault’s vision was of the wealthy that comfortably ignored the deep pain of the world, which was also the pain of Christ. This forces the viewer to ask, “which character am I?”

⁵⁸ Matthew 25:40

⁵⁹ Matthew 25:35-36

Augustine takes note of the way Amos illustrates his point with the style of his language. Augustine interprets Amos' message to be that the opulent people were 'ungrateful... for God's favors in giving them ample lands for their kingdom.'⁶⁰ Amos urges them to go to other lands and compare their boundaries with those of Israel. Augustine uncovers that "the utterance is decorated with the place names as with lights"⁶¹ Augustine is highlighting how the style of speech itself matches the point being made. As Amos reveals the opulence and grandeur of their lands and possessions, scattered throughout the sentence are the names of many lands and kingdoms. The opulence of their living is mirrored by the opulence of numerous examples. The style mimics the subject matter. In a similar way Rouault's style mimics the themes. His lines are broken, he paints and prints in shadow. His paintings were so dark on the canvas that some people even lit a match before them, facetiously straining to see the portrait.⁶²

Augustine observed in Amos that he did not allow eloquence to preoccupy his speech, yet the rustic prophet still used it to his advantage. Rouault himself experimented with technique, but felt firmly that in art, technique must be subject to expression and sensibility.⁶³

Sermons of the Catholic Revival

Rouault of course, as a communicant, would have heard the homilies of his priest. Beyond this, Rouault was influenced by the storytelling and Kingdom-imagination of

⁶⁰ Augustine, IV, 7, 17

⁶¹ Augustine, IV, 7, 17

⁶² Courthion, 102

⁶³ Courthion, 82

some of the activist Catholic revival writers such as Léon Bloy. Rouault said of himself, “I have become the Léon Bloy of painting without having wanted it or sought it.”⁶⁴

However, Bloy apparently does not find this to be true, believing Rouault’s art to be far too grotesque and terrible. He made it clear that he would not accept them as representations of his novels.⁶⁵

Bloy was an interesting character. He was extreme in many ways and chose to live a life of poverty and sufferings, depending upon his friends to the point that some named him an “ungrateful beggar,” which then became the title for one of his books.⁶⁶ Bloy saw himself as a witness of God, and believed that the suffering of the poor was blessed, making them to be “direct recipients of salvation.”⁶⁷ He believed it was his “duty to decry materialism, mediocrity, or spiritual formalism, and he never hesitated to use his office.”⁶⁸ For Bloy, suffering was necessary and connected to humanity to Christ.⁶⁹ He saw Christ’s crucifixion as mystically timeless, being constantly transcendent “epic-like event.”⁷⁰ Also, influenced by Father Tardiff De Moidrey, Bloy saw the suffering of God and Christ as present in every event, transforming them into moments of the divine pathos.⁷¹ Rouault was first introduced to Bloy’s work by finding a copy of the novel *La*

⁶⁴ Dyrness, 44

⁶⁵ Courthion, 103

⁶⁶ Dyrness, 36-37

⁶⁷ Kang, 2003, 117

⁶⁸ Dyrness, 36

⁶⁹ Dyrness, 37

⁷⁰ Dyrness, 39

⁷¹ Dyrness, 34

Femme Pauvre (The Poor Woman) and he liked the “simple directness.”⁷² The two men met and became friends in 1904. Bloy did not always like Rouault’s art, save “The Child Jesus Among the Doctors,” which gave Bloy hope for Rouault’s talent.

In *La Femme Pauvre* Bloy follows the tale of a woman who chose abject poverty because it brought her to God. In her hardships she even lost a child to malnutrition. In this novel Bloy used narrative to reveal the life of the poor and their experience with Christ. As Kang notes, “Bloy founded his belief on the convergence of the physical and the spiritual.”⁷³ The prophetic sermon-stories of Bloy’s novels inspire an imagination in which there are characters full of penitence, precarious arrogance, suffering, sacrifice, and spiritual communion through these things with Christ. In *La Femme Pauvre*, Bloy has a character who chooses to be in total poverty because she sees it as an avenue to the presence of God.⁷⁴

Similarly, Huysmans believed that the suffering of monks lent merit to the sinful society. Following this, Kang notes that Rouault has adopted this in some form, extending the work of mystical substitution to the suffering of all the poor. They bore the image of the suffering Christ.⁷⁵

Looking to the characteristics of Bloy’s writings as well as some of Huysmans’ similar beliefs, one can see attitudes of sacrifice, of hunger for God, of the willingness to suffer, and the connection of Christ to human suffering and misery. From these attitudes

⁷² Dyrness, 40

⁷³ Kang, 2003, 118

⁷⁴ Kang, 2003, 17

⁷⁵ Kang, 2003, 119

the character of God is seen as compassionate, sacrificial, present, transcendent, and redeeming.

Habits of similar posture

Rouault's collection of *Miserere* is the result of his personal habits of faith, influenced by the story-sermons of Léon Bloy. Rouault reveals in *Miserere* characters of penitence, precarious arrogance, suffering, sacrifice, and spiritual communion.

The theme of penitence is represented in the very first plate, and in the images condemning society for their negligence. The first caption is the opening line of Psalm 51, "have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness."⁷⁶ The plate is labeled in the image itself "Miserere" as if on a plaque attached to a frame. There are two figures, a face on top that looks in peace, perhaps even smiling. This face is round and supple and pleasing, with space untarnished with shadow. The man below is in profile, with head bent. Deep trenches of grief seem to mark his cheeks. This man is Christ, appearing very similarly to the Christ in the second plate, in profile with head bent. In the second plate Christ's crown of thorns clearly distinguishes his identity. Christ in the first plate is separated from the pleasant face above by an arched frame. Along the arched barrier and the frame surrounding the whole plate are little tick marks. Perhaps these mark the stripes of Christ, or the thorns that afflicted his head. Referencing the Psalm, the figure ought to be reflective and mournful over his own sin. In context with the rest of the collection however, and the presence of suffering people and those whose souls are in danger due to their pride and negligence, it seems that here Christ cries for all the world.

⁷⁶ Rouault, 50

The lady of plate 16, the lawyer of plate 19, the draft board of plate 40 and the Junker of plate 49 are caricatures of those who look away from the need and struggle of their neighbors and thereby become complicit in their suffering. All of the proud figures of these prints have some amount of authority or resources that are not being used to protect the vulnerable. Plates 14, 15, 1 and 16 together reveal a narrative.



Figures 1-3, Georges Rouault, "A young woman called joy," "In a mouth which was once fresh, the taste of bitterness," The upper class lady believes she holds a reserved seat in Heaven." Copper Plate Prints, Robert and Sandra Bowden collection, on loan to MOBIA, In *Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre: This Anguished World of Shadows*, ed. Holly Flora, Plates 14-16, (New York: GILES, an imprint of D Giles Ltd, and, Museum of Biblical Art, 2006). Used with permission of D Giles. Ltd.

Plate 16 is entitled "The upper-class lady believes she holds a reserved seat in Heaven." She seems to lead a life ignorant of the sufferings around her. The two plates before her are also profiles of "women of joy," or prostitutes. The first of the two, plate 14, the woman's eyes are large, but calm, her cheeks are smooth and she seems pleasant. She calmly sits facing the right side of the frame. The next plate is in stark contrast. What could be an image of the same woman still has wide eyes, but this time she seems to be reeling back from something, perhaps something outside of the frame. We see her from slightly below, and have more access to her vulnerably exposed neck. Both her shoulders are in view, she has turned slightly towards the viewer. The line punctuating her cheek is

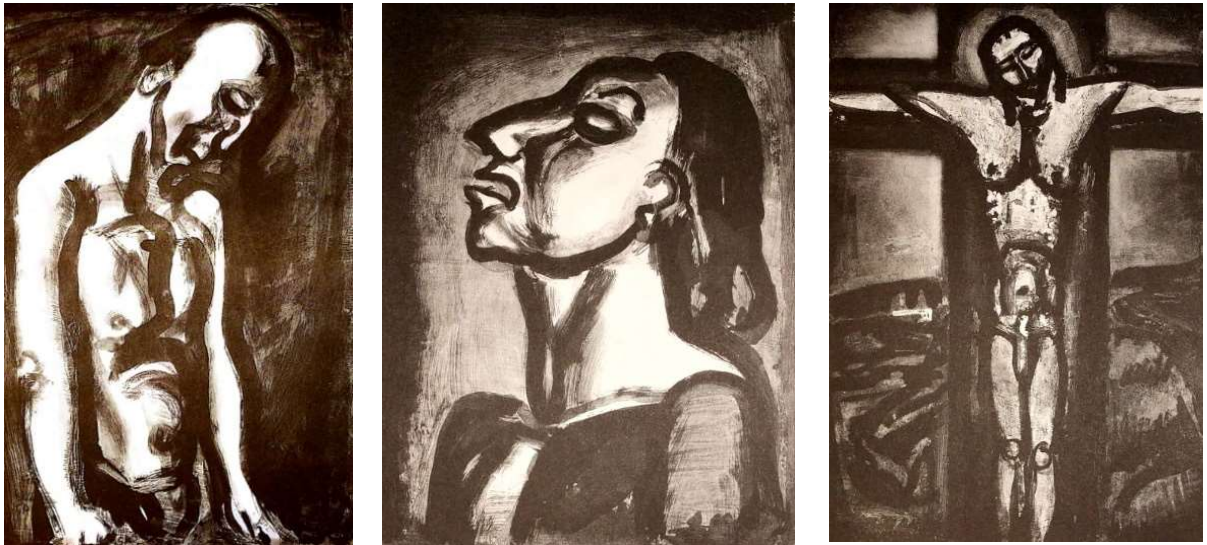
deepened and darkened. The outlines of her nose, mouth, and chin are also heavier than those of the previously plate. The woman of plate 14 is almost smiling while the woman of plate 15 looks grim to say the least. Her caption reads: in a mouth which was once fresh, the taste of bitterness.”⁷⁷ Both plates are of prostitutes- one fresh, not yet ravaged by the world’s evils, the second recoiling from the mark of death and violence of the world. The first woman’s eyes are wide, not yet filled with pain. She seeks and is curious. The plate representing the aftermath of the world is shocked and terrified by what has been seen and witnessed. These are before and after portraits. Or, perhaps the difference between the way they are viewed by their clientele- as welcoming, eager, and youthful- and the revealed truth of the costs paid by these women. These two plates stand side by side and convict the following lady of the “haut-quarter.” Looking at these three plates together the lady has the serenity and beauty of the first, along with her more daintily defined features and the head in profile, oblivious to the outside world. Her body is a cleaner and smoother version of the woman of plate 15 with the bitter taste in her mouth. The same far shoulder just peeking out. The same slope of the foreground shoulder, and the same breasts, but the lady is simple, clean, and unadorned. This lady is a composite of the first two, but with eyes closed. Her body faces the viewer, faces the world, sees what lies in its murkiness, but she turns away. Her peace and naivety are chosen. Her pillaged sisters are ignored by the closing of her eyes. The calm world she is depicted in is one of her own fantasy. Her face is unmoved, as is her heart.

By placing these images in this sequence, a narrative begins to form. Like Amos crying out against those indulging in their wealth and their sin, feeling nothing for the

⁷⁷ Rouault, 78

grinding of their brother, typed as Joseph, Rouault paints a vision of the world that seeps with injustice. He shares the narrative of unsuspecting victims and complicit bystanders.

Another sad tale is told with the plates 18, 19, and 20. A condemned man in the first image is naked, downcast, and sorrowful. Plate 19 holds a lawyer with closed eyes, a high chin, and a sneering open mouth proclaiming “empty phrases.” The third plate bears the cruciform Christ, lifted above a landscape.



Figures 4-6, Georges Rouault “The condemned man has gone away,” “His lawyer, in hollow phrases, proclaims his complete unconsciousness,” “under a Jesus on the cross forgotten there.” Copper Plate Prints, Robert and Sandra Bowden collection, on loan to MOBIA, In *Georges Rouault’s Miserere et Guerre: This Anguished World of Shadows*, ed. Holly Flora, Plates 18-20, (New York: GILES, an imprint of D Giles Ltd, and, Museum of Biblical Art, 2006). Used with permission of D Giles. Ltd.

These images are linked by a common sentence, broken into three parts. “The condemned man has gone away... His lawyer, in hollow phrases, proclaims his complete unconsciousness... under a Jesus on the cross forgotten there.”⁷⁸ In the courtroom there would have been a crucifix on the wall behind the judge’s bench before the separation of

⁷⁸ Rouault, 84-88

the church and state in 1905.⁷⁹ The word Rouault uses in the caption of the lawyer that is translated as “unconscious” could also be translated as insane, or mad. The lawyer with his closed eyes and haughty jowl seems to be facing away from the condemned man. He is unresponsive to the man's misery and untouched by the man's despair. The condemned man is much less clear and stark against his background than the lawyer. The voice of the man is not heard, and his dignity disappears as he has “gone away.” The lawyer on the other hand is given much cleaner and clearer lines. His words, though hollow, ring out and are received by the audience. While his speech is received, his closed eyes block the receipt of the condemned man's need for mercy and pity.

Jesus on the cross in plate 20 hangs in contrast to the lawyer. Jesus' head is bent down, like the condemned man. Like the condemned man, he wears little and is exposed and vulnerable. Like the condemned man, the boundary between the lines outlining Jesus' body and the plane of the instrument of his torture are unclear. Jesus looks much more like the condemned man than he looks like the lawyer. Comparing the cruciform Christ to the lawyer one sees the juxtaposition of responses. One is cold and unfeeling while the other is empathetic. One turns his face upward and shuts his eyes as if to refuse the condemned man dignity of standing face-to-face. The other peers down from above seeing not only the wretched man in court, but his own wretched body on the cross.

The approach of Jesus toward the “least of these” is to see, to know, to weep, and to enter into suffering alongside. Conversely, the approach of the upper-class lady in plate 16 and the hollow-phrased lawyer of plate 19 is to ignore and to deceive themselves

⁷⁹ Soo Yun Kang, ““In the Deep Furrow”: Rouault's views on life and suffering,” in *Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre: this anguished world of shadows*, ed. Holly Flora (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 39

into a world without the suffering of others. The desperation of the poor and suffering which is so clearly revealed in Rouault's collection seems escapable and hidden to his arrogant caricatures. With his types of desperation, of arrogance, and Christ in *Miserere* Rouault tells a convicting and invecting narrative of a society that is not living up to the call of humanity to love and care for their brothers, and of the savior who suffers with and for those in hardship and misery.

Rouault's image of Christ in *Miserere* is incarnational. Christ is placed among, beside, along with, and against the figures of this world. His face is upon the wall above a dead soldier's bed in plate 47. The radiant portrait of Christ's face above the sinful suppliant on plate 34 marks the beginning of the section of *miserere* entitled "Guerre," and echoes the opening image of Christ under the welcoming face. Plate 35 is the cruciform Christ with the caption "Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world." Three images of Christ begin the collection, and three end it. He compares to the weary figures of the downtrodden, and is contrasted against the arrogant who distance themselves from the difficulties of life. Here among these images, we see spiritual communion. A mystical mingling of Jesus on the cross and the suffering of the world. In Jesus, God has become a character among humanity. When Christ enters the human story, history is drawn up into a narrative frame by Christ- a narrative that is intermingled with pain, but will end in hope.

Characters Revealing the Face of God

There are characters of penitence and mourning over injustice and weariness of suffering, the juxtaposed of those who are compassionate with those who are arrogant, of

the crucified Christ- the intermingling savior. Together, they spark the imagination of a kingdom that ought to be different. They enkindle the heart to love a God who has not turned away but has come near. The sermon-story of *Miserere* pictures a God who desires justice, who sees the affliction and hears the cries of the suffering and reaches out in compassion. He chose to come and to suffer with them. He did not simply eliminate their suffering but shared in it. God's action toward a broken world is salvation by selfless giving. God is shown to be just, compassionate, and incarnational- the opposite of the arrogant characters Rouault depicts for the oblivious society.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Hozier: A Witness of the Word

There is both a function of worship that draws us in and centers our Christian imagination, and a function that sends us out. Smith labels these “centripetal and centrifugal.”¹ These functions work together. In order to prepare us to be sent into the world, we need our imaginations to be “conscripted by God,” “sanctifying [our] perception.”² Our imagination of the story this world is a part of needs to be transformed. The story we learn “by heart” will guide and frame our sanctified perception.³ With George Herbert we have prayed to a God who is merciful and forgiving and who gives rest. Georges Rouault has printed onto our hearts the story of a God who bends low and suffers with the world. With our new perceptions, and girded by our Christian imagination of the world’s story of redemption, we will be ready to creatively engage with and critique culture. In this third and final chapter I will explore the nature of the practice of being sent as a witness as expressed by James K. A. Smith and Jean Calvin. I will then introduce the sent witness of Hozier, a secular musical artist who has been shaped by the testimony of the Blues. Using his album *Wasteland Baby!* I will both reveal how Hozier himself witnesses to a kingdom, and demonstrate how with a sanctified perception we can renarrate his testimony as a revelation of God’s re-creational

¹ Smith, James K. A., *Imagining the Kingdom, How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2013), 154

² Smith, 2013, 157

³ Smith, 2013, 163

character. In the power of the Spirit, Hozier's secular witness can become a call to worship the Judeo-Christian God. Throughout this chapter there is a consistent theme of providence. God has chosen to allow Himself to be found even within secular art which claims no attachment to Him. Without destroying them, God has taken broken things and has made them beautiful.

Hozier's Wasteland Baby!

Andrew Hozier Byrne, stage name "Hozier," is a musical artist, a singer and songwriter from County Wicklow, Ireland, which is near Dublin. His family was Catholic, but his parents chose to raise their children in a Quaker church.⁴ He notes the Quaker emphasis on the image of God in all people, and how that leads to their conviction of pacifism. While Hozier admires faith, and seems generally glad for his upbringing, he is not religiously active and hasn't been to church in a few years other than for "weddings and funerals." He is wary of what "powerful people and powerful men say about God and how they use that to control people's lives." His musical debut was the first hit single "Take Me To Church:" a provocative song calling out the use of corruption and manipulation that can be found in the church. He used sacred, or rather, sacrilegious imagery intermingled with romance and seduction. His use of a rousing gospel-like chorus winds its way into many of his later works. This song appeared on his first album which came out in 2014, entitled *Hozier*. Before he gained rapid recognition, he simply wrote and played around his community at open mics nights etc. Hozier's music does not really fit a single genre. His music has been listed on rock, folk, and Top

⁴ Skavlan, "Hozier shares thoughts on his Quaker upbringing | SVT/TV 2/Skavlan," filmed in 2019, YouTube video, 9.34, posted February 4, 2019, <https://youtu.be/qtn-gAQX2z4>

40 charts, as well as being described as Celtic Blues.⁵ In general, his songs have heavy percussive beats that lay the foundation for growing layers of playful twangy bass and electric guitar, of jazz organ, choral choruses, clapping of hands, and Hozier's own authentic and raw voice. After taking a tour with his first album, he took about two years to create his next, released in 2019 and entitled *Wasteland Baby!* This album intentionally speaks of both beauty and sorrow, of evil and hope. It narrates the injustice of reality and finds solace in the potential of the human spirit.

Sending as Critic

One of the ways we answer our call to be sent into the world is engaging with secular art, but first, we must be formed. The centripetal forces of worship draw us into God's presence and truth. They give us a vocabulary and a story to set ourselves and the world within. We are called to first be sanctified, and then sent. Smith draws a parallel between the formation of the Christian's sanctified perception, or practical sense, of the world and the formation of the artistic temperament described by Oscar Wilde. Wilde argues that for the best critic of art, "to be purified and made perfect, this sense requires some form of exquisite environment... Insensibly, *and without knowing the reason why*, he is to develop that real love of beauty."⁶ With the centripetal function on worship we are trained in what to love. We begin to recognize what is lovely both within and without the church and her practices. Our vision becomes honed. Our ears become tuned. The truth of

⁵ Drell, Cady, "HOZIER: A CELTIC BLUES HERO TAKES AMERICA," *Rolling Stone* 1221 (November 6, 2014): 18

⁶ Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," in the *Portable Oscar Wilde*, rev. ed., ed. Richard Aldington and Stanley Weintraub (London: Penguin, 1981), 120, quoted in Smith, 2013, 179 (Emphasis Smith's).

God's character and action in the world, wherever it is found, calls out to us, perceived by our freshly trained senses. Once our minds are renewed, we will "be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."⁷

Wilde expresses that "the critic is also a creator, a maker, who in her engagement with the world of art produces her own creative product."⁸ The formed Christian can be sent via creative critique. Christian critique enables secular art to be used creatively in the worship of God and the witness of the gospel. Our creation by critique is a renarration. It is a transplant and a grafting in of the secular into the sacred. This is renarration because it invites what is secular to participate in the divine story. Christian critique mirrors God's acts upon us as Christians. "While we were yet sinners—" broken and full of misplaced desires- we were invited by grace to participate in God's grand narrative.⁹ God does not build the church with brand-new materials, but goes out into the world to bring in a harvest of disciples. It is important to remember that this Christian critique of secular art would not be possible without the sanctified perception. Without it we could never recognize the beauty of God revealed in the profane- literally, that which is outside of the temple.

It may seem that renarrating and repurposing secular art is less of a witness and more of an acquisition project. The church doesn't seem to be sending a message as much as taking a prize, but this is not the case. The invitation of God to the sinner (each of us) is a surprising one. It seems that we who struggle with sloth, lust, and pride are unfit for such

⁷ Romans 12:2

⁸ Smith, 2013, 178

⁹ Romans 5:8

a Kingdom. The call to participate in God's work is truly marvelous. We are not qualified, and yet He delights in making us part of the team. The invitation sends the scandalous message that there is a place for us in the Kingdom. Smith notes that we are tasked with reminding the world of the source of their desires. "The citizens of the city of God, shaped by and centered in the *polis* that is the *ekklēsia*, are sent from the sanctuary to remind society of who and whose they are."¹⁰ God is the ultimate source and satiation for every desire we have. Sin is the result of desires that have been misplaced. Sloth comes from the desire to rest in the sustaining creator. No human could offer intimacy surpassing the fulfilling presence of an all-knowing God. Only God can bestow infinite worth and love upon each of His children without comparing them to one another. Every desire we have is an imprint of the creator upon His image. Our very being yearns for the hands that molded us. When we are invited into the Kingdom of God, we are invited to have our desires renarrated. Once leading us astray, these desires now become the path toward our creator.

The invitation of secular human expression is a message to those of the secular world that their desires are fit for the Kingdom, in fact, they were custom built for it. A creation cannot escape the reality of its creator. Humanity bears the revelation of our creator and sustainer. Our needs are witnesses to the character of God whom we were made for. Similarly, human creations cannot escape the truth of human experience. Every work of art resounds the hopes, the pains, and the needs of the artist. Even chairs and forks demonstrate the needs of rest and of sustenance. Therefore, it is impossible to invite the creation without in some way extending the invitation to the creator. After all, it is their

¹⁰ Smith, James K. A. *Awaiting the King, Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2017), 122

own desires that have been called worthy of the sacred. By engaging with secular art, by critiquing it and making a place for it within our worship, we are indeed sending a witnessing message that says “Come to the Kingdom you were made for!” The affirmation of secular hopes and experiences is a welcoming message that claims there is a place for each person’s desires within the church.

Calvin: Witness Through Influence

Looking at the liturgical practice of sending as witness through the lens of Calvin’s *Institutes*, we see that the church strives to bring about peace and praise using influence in the public sphere powered by the conviction that public life is an extension of the church’s life. Calvin in his *Institutes* does not speak of witness as proclaiming the gospel to the unchurched for the purpose of inviting them into the community. He does however speak of the function of the church body within the public sphere of civil government. We can analyze the way he approaches government to discover how he thinks about being the church outside the building. Calvin sees civil government as important and necessary. Its goals are to bring about peace and praise. To laws and courts “it is assigned, so long as we live among men, to foster and maintain the external worship of God, to defend sound doctrine, and the condition of the Church, to adapt our conduct to human society, to form our manners to civil justice, to conciliate us to each other, to cherish common peace and tranquility.”¹¹ In other words, Calvin sees the goal of civil government to be right praise of God and peace and justice in the community. These are

¹¹ Calvin, Jean, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), IV.xx.2.

attributes of a rightly ordered community of God. They reveal the character of God's reign, which is Shalom. A peaceful, right flourishing of God's creation.

Speaking about the position of magistrates, Calvin declares "they are not engaged in profane occupations, unbefitting a servant of God, but in a most sacred office, inasmuch as they are the *ambassadors of God*."¹² Ambassadors are those who speak for another, who are representatives, and who do the will of their authority. They are in fact witnesses to the Kingdom of God sent to the public sphere of Earthly life. Here Calvin shows that the church ought to influence the public society in the efforts to bring about peace and praise. The use of public influence for these aims is an act of ambassadorial witness. The use of public influence for the witness of the gospel and for the wellbeing of the community speaks to God's willingness to build His church and meet his purposes *through His people*. God calls the church to mimic His action. He has no qualms with allowing us to participate in His work, unqualified as we might be. God is for His people and through His people. He delights in inviting us to play a part. He gives us influence so that we can bear image to His heart for the world. Influence is not found only in public office however. Briefly, I would critique the belief that Christian influence should be sought only, or even primarily, through political means. Jesus in his ministry never sought nor found political authority, and he didn't have to. His influence does not come through regulations and enforcements, but rather through transformative relationships, examples, and teaching. However, even without a political office, Jesus held and swayed great influence in the community- so much so that he was seen as a threat to the Jewish

¹² Calvin, IV.xx.6, emphasis mine

and Roman authorities. Yet, Jesus himself declared to Pontius Pilot that “My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews.”¹³

For Calvin, the role of the church is to bring about the wellbeing of humanity as well as that of the church. He shows that the sacred and the secular life of the body of Christ is not so separate; there ought not be a great contrast. The daily life of the children of God is to be an extension of their worship, to be acting out God’s will, which is Shalom.

Calvin confesses that all efforts for peace and praise within public life would be “superfluous, if the kingdom of God, as it now exists within us, extinguished the present life.”¹⁴ Here, he admits that if the kingdom of God, now at hand in the Christian life, replaces daily life and the need for official order among humans, then there is no need to attempt to live in a just Earthly society. But the truth is that this present life on Earth, the daily tasks and common goings-on have not ceased. The call of the Gospel is not to stop living, but rather to transform the living. Our hearts are conscripted in right worship of the God of justice which allows us to go out and live justly. It is evident that Calvin does not believe that the kingdom of God rivals the Earthly government and public dealings, although it certainly transforms them. God’s Kingdom is beyond the Earthly city and is not threatened by it. It is because of this transcendence that the Kingdom of God is able to enter into the Earthly city. In section three of book four, Calvin sums up the objectives of civil government: “that a public form of religion may exist among Christians, and humanity among men.”¹⁵ Here Calvin posits that the use of influence and power held by

¹³ John 18:36

¹⁴ Calvin, IV.xx.2.

¹⁵ Calvin, IV.xx.3

Christians is both for the Church, those people whose lives are hid with Christ in God,¹⁶ as well as for the common good, so that people might experience flourishing humanity. This statement allows that not all of society will be the Church. The Church exists not only for itself but for society as a whole. Smith puts it this way in his *Cultural Liturgies*' third book, subtitled "Reforming Public Theology:" "We shouldn't shrink from hoping to bend our policy and public rituals in the direction of rightly ordered love, not so we can "win" or "be in control," but for the sake of our neighbors, for the flourishing of the poor and vulnerable, for the common good."¹⁷ Ultimately, this conviction that public life is an extension of the church reflects the incarnational character of Christ. Christ came from infinite Heavenly splendor into Earthly Historical time.¹⁸ We come out of the church into the public sphere, rubbing elbows with our neighbors and trying to spread peace and praise for the sake of our communities' welfare. God did not stay away, afraid of the brokenness and materiality of this Earth, but chose to enter into it, for he "so loved the world."¹⁹ God is present even in the public life. He does not hide in the church. God's love extends beyond times of intentional praise to indwell all the ordinary rhythms of life on Earth.

The very practice of witness reflects God's character, that He desires for all the world to come to Him.²⁰ He does not wait for us to go to Him, but comes and reveals Himself to

¹⁶ Colossians 3:3

¹⁷ Smith, James K. A., *Awaiting the King, Reforming Public Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2017), 34.

¹⁸ Philippians 2:6-7

¹⁹ John 3:16

²⁰ 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9

us. God desires to be known and to have intimacy with His creation. Therefore He comes to us, and then sends us out to make Him known to others. God is in love with this world, broken as it is. Smith's account of witness- the centrifugal action that follows the centripetal- invites the desires of the human experience by creatively critiquing and renarrating. In secular art we recognize the reflections of God's own beauty that we have come to love through our worship. By our invitation we send the message that the desires expressed in human art were built for God's Kingdom. In Calvin's take on the purposes of civil government we can deduce that the practice of being sent as a witness is the work of God's people to use our influence to bring about a just society of human flourishing for the community's daily life.

Smith's illumination upon being sent as a witness is a guide for how I will creatively critique Hozier's album *Wasteland Baby!*, highlighting those desires that align with the Kingdom and the valued attributes that reflect the face of God. Hozier himself is a witness, employing many methods that match those of both Smith and Calvin, and whose desires are for a kingdom not too dissimilar from that of God's. In Hozier's music we will see glimpses of the character of God refracted through broken human expression. In His grace God chooses to reveal Himself through imperfect means. Each and every sighting, wherever it may be, is a call for us to worship.

The Blues

The Blues is a genre of music that testifies to the brokenness of the world as well as to hope for a new day. Within this music dwells the very essence of the Gospel message. The Blues has had a significant impact in Hozier's creative life. In an interview with Bob

Boilen, Hozier shared a list of some of his music influences. His father was a Blues drummer and had a collection of Blues tapes, CD's, and records. Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, James Brown, and Nina Simone were some of the artists Hozier remembers listening to from the collection.²¹ He shares his love of the Blues with Gary W. Burnett. Burnett is a theologian and New Testament scholar who grew up in Northern Ireland. He was introduced to and "hooked on the Blues" as a teenager.²² He wrote a book entitled *The Gospel According to the Blues* that explores the truth of the Christian message as both implicitly and explicitly narrated by Blues music. Burnett makes an argument that the Blues and the Gospel actually have a lot to do with each other. Both lament and grieve those who are downtrodden, the suffering, and the injustice of the world, while also holding onto a vision of hope. "The essence of the Blues is rooted in human suffering, in grief, in distress, [but] the Blues is not simply a wallowing in all of that- it is just as much an expression of anger and hope that rails against the problems facing us, and that enables us to get to a place where we can rise above it all."²³ Cue the first lines of Hozier's album *Wasteland Baby!* which sing "it's not the waking it's the rising." In his book Burnett is doing the witnessing work Smith lays out. He is looking at the desires and methods of this blue testimony and being reminded of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Blues calls out for justice. "In all their varied reflections of struggle, discrimination, imprisonment, violence, and poverty, Blues songs tell the truth about the

²¹ Boilen, *Your Song Changed My Life : From Jimmy Page to St. Vincent, Smokey Robinson to Hozier, Thirty-Five Beloved Artists on Their Journey and the Music That Inspired It*, (New York: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2016), 151

²² Burnett, *The Gospel According to the Blues*, (Eugene, OR, Cascade Books, 2014), 1

²³ Burnett, 10

injustice of the world.”²⁴ Along this theme, Burnett brings forth exceptional connections between the Blues and the Psalms. The Psalms “give voice to cries from below of pain, anger, and need. They are visceral cries to God, expressing the deep sorrow and mourning of individuals and people in need.”²⁵ Both the Blues and the Psalms are comfortable in lament, in crying out in need, and in admitting that things are not as they ought to be. Neither of them however remain couched in despair. “The Blues is a potent reminder of hope in the midst of struggle.”²⁶ Burnett uncovers this anticipation expressed in many Blues songs as being harvested from the spirituals sown in slavery. The Blues can testify to the broken state of the world because their artists have been formed to hope that there is a different world that could be which was first expressed in the gospel-fueled spirituals. The Blues, like the Psalms, are able to hold together both the broken and the beautiful. Both hope for the Shalom- reigning justice that leads to peace and praise- even before it is in sight. The juxtaposition of their testimony of a broken world with a coming hope creates a tension that forges a strong beauty. This knitting together of the broken and beautiful is an important theme that represents God’s providence in the World- the way His beauty rests alongside the brokenness. God has chosen to be bound to His broken creation out of love for it, and his love will make way for justice. The Blues’ cries for justice reflect the Shalom that southern blacks, as well as the rest of the people on Earth, were made for. God made the Earth to be just and flourishing, and He is remaking it again.

²⁴ Burnett, 36

²⁵ Burnett, 19

²⁶ Burnett, 75

Not all Blues songs offer praise to God, yet I have claimed they desire praise alongside peace. Praise can be translated into the human-to-human experience as love. Worship is a relationship between a God who reveals himself and creation which responds in awe and delight. It is a relationship of love and self-offering. Thus, in some way there is a reflection of the worshipful relationship between God and creation held within the human experience of love and romance. Over time two lovers reveal more and more of themselves to one another with the appropriate response being acceptance and a deepening of the relationship. When the Blues call for Shalom, a state of both peace and praise, they call for a world without oppression and to be known and loved.

Blues musicians renarrate the oppression they incur by their own human expression. “The Blues enabled Southern blacks to process the oppression they face, but more than that, to affirm their humanity over against a system that denied that very fact. It enabled them to state their reality of their troubles, powerlessness, dread, and despair, but at the same time to assert their essential humanness through expressions of rage, humor, courage, and of course, sexuality.”²⁷ The Blues was and is one way for blacks to claim their God-given humanity, moving toward Shalom. They use their own desires to remind themselves that they do indeed have a story. They enter into their own narrative rather than the one of white supremacy that looms over them. In the Blues, the musicians send themselves and their communities the message that their desires and experiences have a place and that they are welcome. This is a mirror to the scandalous invitation to our desires to be received into the Kingdom of God. Human experience is a wonderful conduit for the character of God. His image is present in us and just as the art cannot

²⁷ Burnett, 55

deny the artist, neither can the creature's desires deny the creator's provision. No longer misunderstood and unfulfilled, wandering in a barren land, our desires are validated and given the opportunity for full satisfaction.

In this renarration, it is specifically by human means that justice is brought closer to reality. It is through the human influence that justice is proclaimed. And yet, through the Blues it is possible to do all of this in a non-violent way: a way that does not force wills nor regulate actions. Rather, it is done through the use of expression and experience, through testimony. The Blues, witnessing to the human realities of the artists, makes space for just desires. Burnett states that the Shalom the gospel witnesses to is not brought in through means of violence, that in fact, violence is opposed to it. Jesus' kingdom is "not of this world."²⁸ His kingdom does not use the means typical of the world's powerful people, but rather a renarration that subverts power structures. As Burnett notes, on the sermon on the mount "Jesus here is advocating neither passive acceptance of injustice and tyranny, nor violent revolt against it- it is a third way of active, nonviolent resistance that asserts human dignity in the face of oppression."²⁹ The black artists of the Blues had no political power. They had no authority, and yet by their voice they wielded the influence of wailing testimony, welcoming the desires of their hearts into a story they were renarrating.

The Blues is a witness sent to testify to the wrongness of the world and to the hope for the justice that ought to reign. They reveal the human desires for peace and for praise- be it of God or of a lover. The Blues renarrates their experiences via human

²⁸ John 18:36

²⁹ Burnett, 93

expression, making room for their desires. By doing this they wield their human influence in a non-violent way. They invite their fellow brothers and sisters into a world that could be more just. They invite them to have hope alongside the horrors. Like divine providence, this hope does not ignore or obliterate the pain of the present, but rather offers it place in a bigger story. It offers it a recreation.

The worshipful habits of Hozier

Hozier has been inscribed by a vision of the Blues' kingdom. He has been conscripted by the communal practices of witnessing to both hardship and hope and renarrating the gloom and doom to create a world defined by human peace and praise. He does this having been trained to wield human expression and experience in order to influence his community to press into the work of a just society. *Wasteland Baby!* is a work that celebrates human love and potential while adjacently proclaiming the catastrophes both ongoing and coming. Impending horrors become a foil for the pleasures and beauty available in the moment. Additionally, he contrasts the injustice of the world with the hope of human action. Hozier characterizes the album as enjoying doom and gloom and being animated by an end-of-times-ness.³⁰ Amidst themes of nihilism and futility gleam sparks of playfulness and joy. Hozier, like the Blues, is quite comfortable in juxtaposition. By allowing for both ruin and radiance in his art he testifies to the mixed bag of this world- to the truth that they can be found intermingled in the human experience. Hozier recognizes the brokenness and injustice of the world and calls us to work toward peace as well as to recognize that around us which is already praiseworthy.

³⁰ Hozier, "Hozier - Wasteland, Baby! - Behind The Album Cover," YouTube video, 9.30, posted February 28, 2019, <https://youtu.be/k-ISqUzOqJo>

In the intermingling of beauty with brokenness, failure with freedom, we can recognize the Christian narrative of the world. The children of the Kingdom while in this life are at the same time sinners and yet justified. We are fallen yet the Spirit dwells within us. The divine Word continues to sustain this crazy creation.

Justice for all the world is a vision Hozier is not shy about calling for. “Nina Cried Power,” the opening number, is a call to join the ranks of an artistic army of justice. It starts of simple, but clear and firm with just percussion. Hozier’s smooth voice glides in one bar later, followed by a block chord on the piano at the end of his first line. The bass joins in for the second verse- the chorus for the third as Hozier cries “it’s not song it is the singing.” This first track is a tidal wave- gaining speed, rising in power. It surges forward, sweeping those around it into its motion. This is a grounded, visceral, wail of a people taking arms to join a battle for their very dignity and humanity. Like the way the church is called to cultivate the world with God’s image, so Hozier calls his listeners to “cry power to the devil,” to the evils and injustices of society.³¹ These artists are witnesses to a vision of a just society. They are calling for a peace that feeds the flourishing of the world. Hozier has caught their fever and spreads it out to others. This yearning for justice is linked to the desire for the people of the world to know and be known, to love. His lyrics are critical of the proclivity to fear and hate one another. “It’s not the wall, but what’s behind it, oh the fear of fellow man, it’s mere assignment. And everything that we’re denied by keeping the divide, it’s not the waking it’s the rising.” Hozier calls out as a “mere assignment” the fear that leads to hatred and separation and

³¹ Simone, Nina. “Sinnerman.” *Feeling Good: The Very Best of Nina Simone*. Mercury Records, 1994, MP3. Accessed 2019.
<https://open.spotify.com/album/153rN9N6f7HMJFQyCrgHJ?highlight=spotify:track:66kGihUqR3kRZLxtFBSobF>

division. Rather than hiding and dividing, we ought to be walking toward each other in love- revealing ourselves and being vulnerable. We could be growing together in love and praise. This is the kingdom, the good life, that Hozier hopes for- a world of peace and praise, justice and love for all the world. This movement that starts small and swells into freedom mirrors the missional work of the gospel. We can be reminded of the heart of God for all the world, and the communal aims of the church who does not exist only for herself, but for the peace and praise of all peoples.

Hozier takes the bonfire, the chaos, that threatens to consume the world and makes it the object of his creativity and human expression. The power that claims to overshadow is made to fulfill his purposes of welcoming human expression. Hozier has renarrated the doom and gloom, grafting it into a story of human potential and experience. It is debased, becoming just one among many realities in the “heaven of a human spirit singing.”³² Hozier is renarrating the oppression and injustice of the world, inviting human experience to play the starring role. In an interview with him and his mother Hozier shared that the “album flits between unbridled optimism and hopefulness, and then complete despair and nihilism, and acceptance and also just a ‘get the hell on with it’ to the end of the world.”³³ There are fourteen songs on the album, each a different look at the “bonfire of our times” that some songs dance around while others scream into. While “Nina Cries Power” revels in the human potential, “No Plan” is a dismal look at the impending end of the world. It depicts the malaise with a world that feels disordered, insignificant, without hope save present enjoyment. “To Noise Making (Sing)” is a warm-hearted jaunt praising the power

³² Hozier, “Nina Cried Power,” *Wasteland Baby!*. Rubyworks Ltd., under license to Colombia Records, 2019, MP3.

³³ Hozier, “Hozier - Wasteland, Baby! - Behind The Album Cover.”

of the human voice to express and to gather people together. By making herself heard, she becomes known. “Be” is a plea to a lover to be “good to me,” to be steady and present even in the face of calamity. This song steps outside the world and surreally surveys the evil and injustice of the world. “Would that I” speaks of a new love as an all-consuming fire that burns the wood of long-ago relationships. The album culminates with the title track, a surprisingly accepting contemplation on the impending close of the world and the hope found in the beauty of companionship and love. Hozier invites and praises the desires for justice, meaning, to be heard, to have stability, to be passionate, and to discover beauty and love. The motif of fire shimmers across the album in many of the songs. The “bonfire of our times” has been vanquished, being renarrated as a symbol for just anger, passionate love, and the beginning of something new. In like manner the hope of the gospel is that all the pain and turmoil become part of the story of a redeemed creation; the story becomes one of life and flourishing. The fire is allowed to exist, but the fruits of its efforts are taken captive as fuel for the forge in which the brokenness of the world is reformed.

Hozier is a witness sent from the conscripting practices of the Blues to influence society through contagious human expression for the human work of bringing about human peace and praise. He can be seen to be a musical magistrate wielding his cultural influence to bring about what he envisions a just society to be. If Calvin aimed to shape the actions of the people, Hozier may be more affective, and thus, more effective at shaping desire. Like the Blues, Hozier chooses the weapon of contagious human expression. Hozier revels in humanity and its potential as an ultimate end. He refers to

the expression of the human spirit ringing out for all to hear as a “heaven.”³⁴ This revelation of the human soul through song is euphoric and gleaming with a delight that borders on spiritual. Hozier does not see human means as one way for peace and praise to enter the Earth, but the only way. For him, the human *is* the divine. In “To Noise Making (Sing)” he exemplifies the use of the human voice as self-expression that claims humanity by proclaiming human experience. “Put your emptiness to melody your awful heart to song. You don't have to sing it nice, but honey sing it strong, at best, you'll find a little remedy, at worst, the world will sing along. So, honey sing.” Here, the syncopated piano chords, the tambourine, and the clapping all layer together to become playful and even gleeful. This song revels in the freedom and victory found in expression. There is a human thrill leading him and his lover to “scuff up our shoes” to “the groove of it.” This honest human cry of a painful experience, renarrated to be a “remedy” is a call with which “the world will sing along.” It is contagious. As the song builds, each refrain during which Hozier joyfully mulls over the imperative “sing,” is joined in by other voices. The last fifty seconds of the song is simply a dancing repetition voices joining in to sing along to the melodious human cry. Hozier praises the power of the contagious witness of human expression. Through such means, the awfulness becomes a healing cry that invites others to find healing peace as well.

The work Hozier is calling for is a cultural work, a human work that mimics the creative testimony Smith discusses. In “Nina Cried Power,” Hozier, along with Mavis Staples, call out the names of those cultural magistrates who have gone before. These artists have affectively been making way for shalom in the world. It is musicians that

³⁴ Hozier, “Nina Cried Power (feat. Mavis Staples)”

Hozier claims have cried power, who have risen, who grounded “a foot uncompromising.” They have sought out those who are behind the wall and have torn down the divide. Hozier is calling out to his listeners to deny the “face that tells you to rattle your chains” the pleasure of being the narrator. He is sending an invitation to act, to be moved by the witness of Nina Simone, Patti LaBelle, B.B. King, Billie Holiday, Woody Guthrie, and others. The call is to rise by the cry of a human tongue, to cast forward the story of what the world could be if its people spoke up.

“Wasteland, Baby!” is the last song on the album. It enters softly and gently, like a lullaby. Content fingers pluck at a guitar with no rush. Hozier’s voice enters- the only one on this track. He sings sweetly, tenderly, of a love in the midst of chaos. In this romance there is hope for a new beginning as all the ruin surrounding them calls out to them for hope of healing action. The brokenness is an opportunity for change. Unlike the rousing roar of “Nina Cried Power,” or the playful raw shout of “To Noise Making (Sing),” this song is at rest. Rather than jumping to action, it sits and ponders. It floods the senses with a peaceful ember of love. While Hozier claims that it is not about the waking, or what I would call the conscripting of worship, here he is taking in a scene and contemplating its significance. Rather than rising, the characters of his story are resting in their love for one another, their eyes are opening to potential of their love. He is comparing a new romance with a wasteland- a place of desolation and famine. Not because human love is broken, although it is, but because of its invitation for healing. “When the stench of the sea and the absence of green, are the death of all things that I’ve seen and unseen, aren’t an end, but the start of all things that are left to do.” During the first line of this tag, from “When” to “green,” the synthesizer which has been lapping in and out like the gentle lilt of water

begins to fade. It is gone by “the death of all things,” leaving just Hozier’s voice and the gentle plucking of quiet strings. Yet, at the emergence of the words “aren’t an end” the fluid movement of the synthesizer blooms again, carrying an audible vision of hopeful vegetation spreading across the barren land. Hozier leaves his audience with a serene display of a new beginning that actually begins with praise, with seeing that which is beautiful and coming to a hope that leads one to embark upon those “things that are left to do.”

Through Hozier’s witness, we are called not only to be conscripted by the real story of an unjust world with hope for peace and love, but to take up the vision and walk out the door with it. While Hozier claims that we need to get on with the work in “Nina Cried Power!” he reveals by his means throughout the album that being conscripted, being formed, catching vision is an important first step that leads to new beginnings. His work as a witness is in fact almost a priestly role to lead the conscripting practices of music contemplation. He is setting the listeners’ heart ablaze. But of course, by its nature, the centripetal force coexists with the centrifugal. What draws in also sends out. The contemplation comes alongside the action. So perhaps, it’s not *just* the waking, it’s the rising.

CONCLUSION

Unbroken Praise in a Broken World

For Christian artists, we can say that their sacred art is a response of worship to seeing God's face. Thus, when the Spirit opens the eyes, ears, and heart of those who read, look, or listen on, the artists' response becomes the revelation. The pattern begins again. In art, by the Spirit's power the human expression of worship becomes the call for others to respond to the face of God. I argue that the same is true for secular art. Their love for, and thus their worship of, the characteristics of God such as justice, peace, and mercy, is poured out into their art. Unbeknownst to them, when they glimpse flecks of God's face in their own kingdoms, they render some amount of worship and it is stamped in their work, ready to be used by the Spirit. In this project, I have demonstrated how we, as Christian *homines liturgici*, may seek that revelation of God's character which calls us to wonderful worship. In human expression we can find the power of the communal practices upon our habits which carry our desires toward embedded teloi- all sealed by the power of the Spirit. Contemplating the ways Herbert, Rouault, and Hozier have dealt with brokenness and pain, we can remember and revel in the truth that God is not scared of our darkness. He does not leave us alone in it, but draws near, offers solace, suffers with us, offers hope, all because he loves this fallen world. When we recognize the pain, suffering, darkness, sin, and barrenness of this world, and yet continue to worship, we are inscribing upon our hearts the reality of a world that is in the process of being redeemed. We are blessed with an imagination of a mixed-matched, intermingled, juxtaposition of

the broken and beautiful in this reality. This mixed bag of a world testifies to the creative, loving, freeing God we love, desire, and worship.

Nothing is so broken that it is not in some way beautiful. On the other hand, nothing in this world has remained unscathed. Human expression is not perfect. And yet, it has the capacity through the grace of God to hold within itself truth and to reflect divine beauty. This is providence- the grace of God to use what is broken in the world to hold and reflect beauty- a beauty all its own. It does not take up the space of what was broken, does not obliterate it, but rests in the very same space, alongside it. This beauty does not remove the brokenness, but rather, scandalously invites it to play a part in the divine narrative that ends in perfect wholeness, perfect love, and perfect peace.

Providence is powerful enough to allow the brokenness to be what it is. Brokenness is no threat. Providence respects the broken will, and yet somehow uses its efforts to bring forth life. Due to the redemptive work of providence, out of the footsteps of death, flowers spring forth. The true victory of God's creative redemption is not a foe vanquished, but rather, a servant won. The redemption of the world is a recreation, but not because what was broken has been scrapped, tossed to the side, and forgotten. Rather, the recreation is the pouring out of beauty upon an undeserving brokenness. Beauty chooses to make His dwelling among us, alongside our darkness, ugliness, sin. He does not start anew, but in love and mercy takes us into His hands to again stir up living breath in our lungs. We are given a new story, woven into the history which already stood.

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