

## ABSTRACT

### The Light We Love

A Discernment Framework for Relating to Images on Social Media

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I doubt whether we really pay attention to all the images we create in a day. Even more, I doubt we really pay attention to all the images we consume in a day, especially on social media platforms. So how might we discern the images we consume there? How might we know what kinds of images we should share with others? Inspired by my own experiences as an adolescent during the genesis of social media and drawing on Augustine's Confession's, I create a discernment framework to aide our spiritual sense of sight in this environment. After considering how to discern the types of images we consume, I then put forth a framework for kinds of images we can create in this environment by elaborating and displaying my own examples.

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THE LIGHT WE LOVE:  
A DISCERNMENT FRAMEWORK FOR RELATING TO IMAGES ON SOCIAL  
MEDIA

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### A Note on the Definition of Image:

It is worthy, because of connotations, to briefly note two key elements to keep in mind throughout the work regarding the meaning of image. The first is to distinguish between an image, symbol, and a picture. Following Dr. Carnes and her book *Image and Presence*, an image represents a likeness and is like a type of sign. In this way an image is always pointing toward some archetype.<sup>1</sup> This is contrasted with a symbol which does not contain a likeness to the archetype but may point to the direction of it like smoke to a fire or a Nike swoosh on a black background. Finally, a picture is different in that it does not bear a likeness to something. I think of pictures on social media in reference to photographs so blurred you cannot identify the content. The second element to keep in mind is that an image names a “relationship mediated by communities, institutions, histories, and desires. One person’s image is another person’s idol”.<sup>2</sup> This is important to keep in mind when discussing the kinds of images on social media because there are many relationships at stake between a viewer’s consumption and our sharing of an image. I chose a broader notion of image as opposed to photograph because so often our photographs today have been edited afterward and employ stylistic techniques the camera itself is often incapable of. That we style a photograph to better suit the likeness we are desirous of makes the broader use of image more appropriate. Finally, my images I create are edited using style techniques and therefore are better suited to the term image.

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<sup>1</sup> Natalie Carnes, *Image and Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 5-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God—a light, voice, odor, food, embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is a sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume which no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God.”*

*- Augustine, Confessions, Book X*

## PROLOGUE

God, you know my every movement (Ps. 139:2). When I think about my life, I see that there is no part apart from you. I saw you in all my memories and now I cannot unsee you there. Who showed me this but you through those creations of yours that have gone before me? Augustine, Lewis, Mary: your saints spoke to me, while your teachers here on this earth equipped me. Can the memory of mine you're redeeming equip others? Can my recollection aide your children? This I ask of you to be this works impact. I want to shun the inclination that desires praise for myself. You have shown me what folly that aim is. You know that I spent years seeking the praise of the world by all the means around me, but especially through praise I could get through images. The first time I made a social media account I was eleven years old. I spent the better part of my adolescence growing up online and on images. So much seemed to be said through images in this place but where were the words in them? Did eyes in a selfie speak? I looked upon sights there and found my emotions moved by what I saw. Certain images seemed to tell me to want them. Some told me to imitate them. Few made me despise them. They were speaking to me God, but I did not know what they were saying! I was moved but did not understand how. Your word was a part of my life, but I saw it only as a word. What could it possibly say about images? It was a book to me, and its instructions felt antiquated. Yet I clung to you still. Some part of me wanted to believe in a love with dimensions so vast only faith could contain (Eph 3:18). But this world of social media and frequent consumption and creation of images distracted me from growing in you. Most poisonous was the power of



ambition it gave my youthful palms. I controlled when I received praise and how much I was getting. By shaping the content to what would appeal to those who saw it, I could win the praise of people. I did not know this is what I was achieving then. Only you have revealed the depth of this to me now in your kindness so that my repentance may lead to life (2 Corin7:10). Likes and followers were symbols of affection from others, and I craved this. After all, what is more woven into the fabric of your creation than affection? You called to me as I ran to images in search for love, and I heard you. When I sought you, I found your church through images on social media, and I found youth groups full of your children who were all growing up on images too. We were lost and foolish. I noticed sins praised in images and people risking their lives for foolish viral trends. What foolishness I wanted to display to others! Boys with your cross symbol around their neck asked my friends and I for images of our bodies. I watched as girls around me refused to eat because they did not like the way they looked in an image. I too went a whole summer without eating anything pleasurable for fear of appearing unlikeable in an image. Your creation! Your daughters made in your image disliking the very thing you made because when we shared ourselves in an image it did not receive the kind of praise we craved! I know now it is because only in you can one find the satisfaction we were seeking (Ps 17:15). Yet it was not only praise for myself that I was after but also a kind of knowledge that sought knowledge for no reason but to know. With social media I could look at the lives of others and judge them. I found myself drowning time in seeking out information that did nothing but make me want more images and more things to look at. My eyes lusted for more images (1 John 2:16). Many people I met, I researched in

advance by finding them on social media and often became lost in foolish assumptions about them (Prov 18:2). So distracted by the images around me, I could not take my thoughts captive to you (2 Corin 10:5). Even pleasures that are good gifts from you Lord, I became entrapped by. Images of your creation I delighted in and sought after but failed to praise you for them (Luke 17:18). What was I to do in this state of deception? Who but you could adapt this social media to the use of truth? How can I claim this space for your glory? You have shown me how to consider this space anew and look on what I see there in light of you and the praise you deserve. What is left but to thank you, my love, and my guide. So sweet is your love, it is better than life (63:3). Now, I only long for that one image you made and sent--the image that will redeem me and this world (Col 3:1).

**CHAPTER ONE****Port of Social Media**

*I am at the port of social media with my boat named Consider trying to set sail and cross the Sea of Contemplation to the Land of Light. With my experiences and Consider, I can leave this place and sail to a land I long for. At first, I did not long to leave. After all, the port of social media appears to provide the best way to relate to images. I believed this was best until I saw a unique boat in the port inviting people to relate to images in a different way. Longing to visit the place this boat was from I set sail for the Land of Light.*

*Introduction*

I doubt whether we really pay attention to all the images we consume in a day. Even more, I doubt we really pay attention to all the images we create in a day. This does not come as a surprise in an epoch dominated by the image. Their ubiquity creates a sense of belonging and, maybe, in an unconscious way, leads us to approve of their presence. After all, it's compelling to have the ability to use a camera to make the invisible visible or lend a sense of permanence to temporal moments. But how should we understand digital images we consume? What kinds of images should we feed others?

With the pervasiveness of the image in the social media environment, it is often difficult to employ the skill of discernment over all we consume. Indeed, the frenetic pace of life impedes some functions of reasoning that rely on rumination. I almost always

forget something when I leave my house in a rush, and I think that's what happens with images and how we share them in this new space. We don't make time for intentionality. Too often, we run out the door and leave discernment behind. This is most ironic because we get the word *discernment* from the Greek word, *aisthesis* (aka aesthetic) which means perception. Recently, a photograph depicting Pope Francis in a white, high-end puffer jacket went viral.<sup>3</sup> Of course, it was fake. Created by AI, this was a deception, but who could readily tell? The general public scrolling social media is not equipped with the rhetorical skills necessary to understand all of the many visual powers of persuasion. Instead, we look for solutions in new technologies that promise to decipher visual deceptions. Yet is this really who we want to be? A people dependent on technology for discernment?

Part of the power of social media platforms resides in profiting from our collective ignorance. An ignorance that absorbs every single image without realizing that theology, politics, ethics, and our emotions are all at stake.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, social media is a Western invention that subsumed into it a pedagogy of image that teaches users to relate to images with our desires in a consumptive way, neglecting the crucial element of critique.<sup>5</sup> In this way, there is a kind of relationship viewers tend to have with images in this space even though the image itself could potentially be related to in a different way.

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<sup>3</sup> James Vincent, "The swaggered-out pope is an AI fake — and an early glimpse of a new reality", TheVerge.com, March 27, 2023, <https://www.theverge.com/2023/3/27/23657927/ai-pope-image-fake-midjourney-computer-generated-aesthetic> (accessed April 1, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis recognized a similar ignorance in the teaching of Grammar to young pupils in the *Abolition of Man*. This was inspiration for how I came to view some of the ways images have taught me. Although not a formal textbook, our blatant creation and consumption of images without a view to their explicit or implicit ends can be harmful. One of the problems that seems apparent to me is the way we do not know how an image we see fits into Natural Law, that is into the "Tao", or not.

<sup>5</sup> Carnes, *Image and Presence* (Stanford University Press, 2018), 45

If our primary way of relating to images in our lives is through consumption, we leave less room for a pedagogy of contemplation to emerge. We deprive ourselves of a relationship to images that invites us into divine life.

Without visual discernment we remain unable to make sound judgements and remain unable to cultivate affections correctly. Discernment helps us know what we should love, and knowing love is the very essence of life. The images we make and the ones we tend to consume in a social media environment are, at the most basic level, reflections of our affections--and we express affection with images by praising their content. To remedy the lack of discernment there is one thing we can do: consider.

#### *Word and Image:*

A relationship of praise in images can be illuminated through understanding the aim of rhetoric. In discourse, rhetoric's aim is to persuade using three different modes of speech known as the forensic, deliberative, and epideictic.<sup>6</sup> When we use words to persuade about something that happened in the past, we use the forensic mode (think about legal cases or historical studies). When we use words to say what course of action should be taken, we use the deliberative. When we praise things with our mouths, we are using the epideictic mode of speech.<sup>7</sup> Consider anytime you offer a verbal compliment to someone. This kind of speech is epideictic—it is prizing something about that person. We

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that sometimes different words are used to describe these three modes. For example, sometimes the Epideictic is referred to as the Laudatory Genre. Nevertheless, the three principal forms remain no matter what they are called.

<sup>7</sup> (Cicero 1954, 173). Although [Cicero] associates the Epideictic with praise of individuals because his aim in this work is to focus on public speaking that deals with matters of Roman law, custom, and citizenship; I am broadening his definition to encapsulate praise of humans, the material world, and the natural world.

also praise by censuring or discussing what we *don't* prize to better illustrate what we *do* prize. Whether we are praising or censuring, we are using this rhetorical mode to persuade people through what we prize—and the culmination of what we prize is what we love.

But what does this have to do with social media? Rhetoric has traditionally been concerned with visual perceptions because while it can refer to the written word, it has historically been seen as a physical oration relying on key elements of Delivery to achieve a persuasive goal. These perceptions have a bearing weight on a viewer's judgement.<sup>8</sup> (Importantly, for Aristotle, there was a recognition that appearances are “inherently instable and often unreliable”).<sup>9</sup> Images on social media function as a kind of oration, reflecting how we want to persuade others.<sup>10</sup> This becomes even more tricky when epideictic rhetoric is being used because the epideictic is concerned with *showing* that something is to be praised or censured. For example, if you look at your social media, you will see the epideictic as you scroll— advertisements for things you need, pictures of places you should go, and people doing things you “should do” too.<sup>11</sup> These

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<sup>8</sup> Ned. O'Gorman, “Aristotle's 'Phantasia' in the 'Rhetoric': 'Lexis', Appearance, and the Epideictic Function of Discourse.” *Philosophy & rhetoric* 38, no. 1 (2005): 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Ned. O' Gorman, in his article on Aristotle's conception of Phantasia and Lexis, notes the relationship between phantasia, lexis, and the rhetorical audience.

<sup>11</sup> There is not space here in this work to illuminate how the deliberative and the forensic are also used in this space, but it is important to note that all three rhetorical modes can be and are used. For example, if you see a social media post of a place hiring and encouraging people to apply, this is deliberative (encouraging you to take a course of action). What I am arguing is that because of the heavy use of phantasia in a deliberative public space like social media, the predominant kind of rhetoric is the epideictic.

posts are persuading us of what they prize in them, and all have been targeted to us because of things you have either consciously chosen to prize (follow) or subconsciously chosen through an algorithm that adapts to our engagement patterns.

But why would this environment of social media be based on the epideictic mode of rhetoric? The epideictic uniquely “draws on phantasia to shape the affective ground of deliberation and judgement” by drawing on emotions which are tied to belief (*doxa*).<sup>12</sup> More simply put, the epideictic is a visual form of rhetoric and because of this it has a unique ability to impact what we believe in.<sup>13</sup> As social media relies on the visual to communicate and show things, it is no wonder that it became a space for this kind of rhetoric to thrive.

Interestingly, Aristotle was concerned about “delimiting the proper sphere and end of epideictic over and against deliberative and forensic rhetorics” because of the visual power of epideictic.<sup>14</sup> One issue with social media today is that there is no delimitation between these modes. This is compounded with a general amplification of content such that we are saturated in rhetoric in a way we have not had to confront before. With every scroll, we expose our emotions to new content that bears an impact on us emotionally through our sense perception. Our processing speed, which helps us discern content, cannot keep pace with our consumption speed.

Moreover, this environment encourages us to respond in the epideictic mode to what we consume. When we see things that other people praise or prize, especially if we

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<sup>12</sup> O’Gorman, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 17

have affection for the person who is sharing, it seems as if we tend to want to join with them in prizing what they prize. When you agree with someone's Tweet, you re-tweet. When you agree with someone's Instagram post, you like or comment or share it. When we read a news article that speaks to what we prize in life, we are compelled to want to share or tell someone about it. In this environment of social media, a relationship between creating praise and responding in praise through our lifting up of our voices (or Tweets or likes) in agreement with what was created.<sup>15</sup> It is interesting that our social media environment has been set up so the way we are best equipped to respond to what others are saying is through primarily praising or censuring. If we are confronted with an environment based on either praising or blaming, where does that leave room for the ambiguous and not yet? So, our social media environment, propelled by Epideictic Rhetoric, has become a chamber of praise with the sights of what we prize in this world.

But what does this have to do with discernment of content and the kinds of images we see? That there are sights we should prize and others we should not, may appear to some as a restrictive thought. After all, one of the benefits of social media is that we can, in fact, access information we would have never been able to before. Yet, a fallacy of the current era is seeing information as neutral and not having ends it is trying to persuade us of.<sup>16</sup> This persuasion impacts us whether we realize it or not. To be aware of those ends is important and to be aware of what is good to look at with our eyes and nourishing to our souls is even more important. Even more, if we are going to make

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<sup>15</sup> We can also respond in censuring content as a form of praise. However, this work is focused on the positive form of praise primarily.

<sup>16</sup> Donnelly, *Lost Seeds of Learning*, (Classical Academic Press, 2021), 9.



images as Christians and use those in a social media environment, it is important to know how what we share reflects our duty to love God and others well.

In observing the way people consume images, particularly on social media, I found that we are largely unaware of these ends embedded into images and our duty of care to what they may be saying to others. I have seen this at an institutional level in places like the Western Evangelical Church; where, in a desire to share Jesus via promotion of their building or people, churches end up in a cycle of praising themselves. The irony should not be lost on the beloved Church—the place where broken people go to praise the LORD-- that in our attempt to get people to gather to worship and praise God, we habitually use a method of self-praise in the form of marketing. We are praising our church buildings, our pastors, and our bands to get people to come join. Marketing has become a tool of Evangelizing. What seems to have happened because of this is that we have habituated Christians to relate to images in Churches as a form of consumptive marketing instead of as a contemplative mode considering the one True Image. Beyond institutions, I have seen this ignorance in personal social media profiles. A cycle of consuming and creating images of constant praise has become a habit for many and is even prescribed as a key to having successful online platforms, church growth, or needed “self-promotion”. Even the idea of a *selfie* is a way of persuading others about our self through praising ourselves or what is on us in our image. This connection of Epideictic Rhetoric in images is most clearly illustrated in advertisements which are simply vehicles of praise for a good or service with the end goal of getting you to choose them and agree

that they are worthy of your time or resources.<sup>17</sup> Once aware of how social media is functioning in regard to rhetoric, we must begin to distinguish and give name to the kinds of images we consume and how we are tempted to consume them on social media.

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<sup>17</sup> Again, it is important to note that in these advertisements there is often a call to action which is a demonstrative form of rhetoric. Often, the most powerful advertising will use these two modes of rhetoric together.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Storms of Visual Sophistry

*Once out of the port of social media through recognizing the persuasion in images, I began crossing the sea of contemplation. And behold, there arose in the night a storm of visual sophistry, so that Consider was being swamped by the waves. Unable to see clearly, I became deceived by what I saw—swallowing the false hope of the visible.*

Images on social media become temptations when their content tries to allure a viewer into deceit. They do this by enticing us toward sights through praise that can distort love to lust which leads to a disordering of our affections. In other words, we see in these images something that we think to be good, but really have a “flawed reflection of beauty”.<sup>18</sup> Augustine accounts for sights producing a lust of the eyes in Confessions X by drawing on his own present experiences. He describes carnal pleasure, curiosity, and ambition (this includes the pride of life and admiration) as temptations built on deceit.<sup>19</sup> This description of tempting sights for Augustine seems like sophistry in rhetoric, where words are intentionally spun together to deceive, by sounding or appearing eloquent. That is why I have chosen to name these images as visual sophistry-- images made toward an end that either explicitly or implicitly deceive. The success of that deception depends on how we relate to that image. Through distinguishing these potential temptations, we can

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<sup>18</sup> Saint Augustine, Confessions. Translated by Henry Chadwick. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) ,vi (12).

<sup>19</sup> At this point in the confessions, Augustine has already come to know the Lord and is describing the temptations he still faces. He speaks about these temptations in other portions of Confessions but because the Epideictic is concerned with a present form of praise, I chose to focus specifically on Augustine’s own present.

discern images we should be cautious around or images we should discard from our sight all together. If our discourse should ultimately praise God, then so, too, our images should strive toward praise.

### *Carnal Pleasure*

Images on social media that bring pleasure and delight to all our senses, can be occasions for temptation by directing our affections toward things of this earth rather than toward God.<sup>20</sup> These are images of carnal pleasure. Explicitly, this is frequently seen in advertising images. Yet, this can also be implicitly found in images shared by people we follow in reflecting a likeness to clothes, shoes, sexual acts, food, beverages, places around the world and other “beautiful externals”.<sup>21</sup> In many cases it is hard to distinguish between an advertisement and a “regular” image from someone we follow because social media relies on the epideictic mode. Both types make a public proclamation about something through praise. This becomes even more blurred when Influencers (individual people) become promoters of any person, place, or thing in their images. In this way an advertisement can be embedded into an image someone shares simply by the item’s presence. For example, if a friend of mine shares an image of herself and her friend’s eating food at a restaurant and having a wonderful time, the image operates not only as praise of the specific people in the image, but also praises the setting where their enjoyment is taking place.

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<sup>20</sup> Augustine, xxxiv (53)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Dr. Carnes notes in her work *Image and Presence* that “despite their differences, the advertising image is kin to the pornographic: they both catechize for consumption and arrest literal desire from its transformations.”<sup>22</sup> Carnal pleasures in this space encourage us to consume them and find our desire for what is depicted satisfied by the image itself. In looking at an image that attempts to satisfy us by showing us what we desire, we can end up not leaving space for what desire the image cannot fulfill. We arrive at these images that are assured to bring us pleasure, but by remaining here we entrap our eyes and are led to “blindly love the world”.<sup>23</sup> Augustine asserts that this entrapment of our eyes happens when we spend so much time in consumption of sights of carnal pleasure that we become “mentally fatigued” from doing so. We “dissipate [our strength] in delights” by spending ourselves on desires that we crave.<sup>24</sup> Temperance is nowhere in sight and is, instead, replaced by the repetitious chant: “more”.

The emphasis of this kind of temptation is how carnal pleasure content tempts us to relate to it. In other words, in a clothing image, I am tempted to see that clothing as wonderful in and of itself instead of it pointing to “that beauty which is higher than souls”.<sup>25</sup> We are tempted to blindly love the world by not recognizing the ultimate source of pleasure. We stare at our plates full of what brings us delight, eating and eating and eating without ever considering the source of this delight. These images are illusory and can never truly satiate us because they can never actually give us the desire they presume

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<sup>22</sup> Carnes, *Image and Presence* (Stanford University Press, 2018), 45

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, xxxiv (52)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

to fulfill.<sup>26</sup> We are tempted to lust in this way because we can begin to have affection for the things of this world while neglecting affection for the maker of the world. Becoming entrapped in the pleasure of these images we never move beyond them and end up in a cycle of lusting for an earthy pleasure that cannot ultimately satiate us.<sup>27</sup> We sing praises to the pleasures of the earth and, if we are not careful, end up bowing to them as well.

To combat this temptation, Augustine suggests three antidotes. First, we can guard our strength by moderating our consumption of images of carnal pleasure. Maybe this is done through considering what types of accounts we should follow or at what time and for how long we will watch the news each day. Either way, limiting our consumption of these images is key to saving our strength for the world beyond carnal delight. We must also know how to praise the creator for beautiful externals. Augustine says that those who know how to do this “are not led astray by it in a sleepy state”.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Augustine notes that by keeping mercy before his eyes, he was able to be rescued by the LORD.<sup>29</sup> In essence, the way out of this temptation is by considering how Christ fulfills, redeems, and transforms our pleasures anew in Him.

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<sup>26</sup> Carnes, 50.

<sup>27</sup> While I am strictly speaking of the social media environment in this work, I do think it worthy to add that I believe this constant adjustment of our lives to images of pleasure can contribute to our modern tendency to see no positive benefit of suffering.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

## *Curiosity*

Augustine identifies curiosity as another temptation that deceives us through misdirecting our affections. Contrary to carnal pleasure, which enjoys images of something *pleasurable* to excess, curiosity hinges on the delight we get from the *perception* acquired by looking at an image.<sup>30</sup> It is the difference between looking excessively at images of clothing to buy or seeing a friend and their significant other in an image and using it gossip. Thomas Aquinas' analysis of curiosity is helpful in order to understand what Augustine is portraying in Book X and to delineate between a kind of intellectual curiosity and a kind of curiosity strictly concerned with what can be seen.<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologia*, investigates curiosity and provides a conclusion for two ways we can direct *sights* we perceive toward a sinful end.<sup>32</sup>

The first way this good gift of curiosity can be corrupted is when we use what we have seen in an image and direct that insight toward an end that is not useful, leading to a "vain inquisitiveness".<sup>33</sup> The second way curiosity is corrupted is when we take what we have seen in an image and direct it toward a harmful end. Aquinas specifically discusses how a sight could lead to lusting for another's body or seeing something about another person's life and using that sight to gossip or speak ill of another. It could also become sinful when a sight of cruelty makes us more prone to cruelty or when we see our

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxv (54).

<sup>31</sup> While social media holds implications for what Thomas Aquinas calls intellectual knowledge, this work strictly considers sensitive knowledge, that is, what can be perceived.

<sup>32</sup> ST II-II, q. 167, a. 2

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, xxxv (54).

neighbor doing something cruel in an image, but we do not lovingly correct them (Heb 10:24).

So, how is this kind of curiosity a temptation with images on social media? Certain features such as the endless scroll, endless search, and a swathe of constant images makes vain inquisitiveness, which is a kind of deception, hard to avoid. Mindless consumption of images, specifically when we sit and scroll very quickly, can lead to using what we see for no useful end.<sup>34</sup> Specifically I see this temptation in our social media environment in the way curiosity makes us distracted. Augustine says the impact of this cupidity on his life was that his heart became a “receptacle of distractions” and a “container for a mass of empty thoughts” that interrupted his ability to commune with God.<sup>35</sup> It is comical to read Augustine’s words about how much his curiosity was poked every day and then look at the world we live in. I have had this happen to me on numerous occasions; where, I go onto social media to search for something useful and end up viewing other content and forget why I got onto the platform in the first place. This insight of Aquinas’ begs us to ask of images we make and consume: are they vain? It also encourages a consideration of whether social media is the right place for the kind of thing I want to know more about. In other words, do the ends of the knowledge I want, justify the means of a social media image?

When we relate to images on social media by using what we see in them toward a sinful end, we are also being deceived. Using images of someone for sexual pleasure,

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<sup>34</sup> To understand what Aquinas means when he uses the term useful, we can look to his response to the objections. He argues that useful sensitive knowledge is either one that helps us keep up with practical manners regarding the upkeep of the body or an intellectual knowledge that’s speculative or practical.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, xxxv (56).



screen capturing an image and sharing it in a group chat to gossip about it, and seeing a neighbor doing something wrong but not calling them out and up to a greater standard can be an indication of misusing our curiosity. I think of this misuse of images in particular relation to disturbing news stories when we click on an article or see something we know will disturb us. I remember a temptation for this clearly when a photo was released of ISIS beheading someone. A part of me wanted to see this cruelty simply so I could know. I was not going to use this sight of cruelty to love my neighbor better or tell ISIS how wrong they were, it was for me—for my gratification. Contrastingly, after the murder of George Floyd, cruel images were released of him being held down by police officers. For some people these images were used to call out an injustice and lament with the hope of provoking our nation to do good.

Does social media often lead to me relating to images of other people by gossiping, backbiting, or otherwise looking down on them? Do I use images of cruelty in this space for my own gratification or to help me love my neighbor better by exposing injustices and shedding light on a hidden darkness? These questions can help us steward the curiosity that is so easily provoked in this space.

There are also ways to steward our curiosity with images on social media toward a good end. Aquinas notes that curiosity can be positive when we use it help us upkeep the sustenance of our bodies, when we inquire into a person's actions to be encouraged by their good deeds to do good deeds ourselves, and when we use what we see to correct a neighbor doing something wrong “according to the rule of charity and the duty of one's position”. One positive of images on social media has been health campaigns that encourage a better way to supply our bodies with nutrients. It is also great to see images of people you follow doing great things—serving those in need, loving a family member, or loving an enemy (such as

when we see great acts of bipartisanship).<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, the way out of this temptation is by considering how Christ fulfills, redeems, and transforms our perceptions anew in Him.

### *Ambition*

The final temptation of visual sophistry is that of a kind of twisted ambition. “The temptation is to wish to be feared or loved by people for no reason other than the joy derived from such power”.<sup>37</sup> It is a praise we want for ourselves. We are tempted to “amass approval” and from this we begin to find truth in humans instead of God.<sup>38</sup> Augustine says this temptation “likes to gather and beg for support to bolster a kind of private superiority”.<sup>39</sup> The danger in this temptation, similarly to the others, is the way in which it turns us away from God. Augustine notes that humans will praise us even when we are sinning and even if we possess something praiseworthy, we are tempted to find “more joy in being praised than in having the gift”.<sup>40</sup>

It is very easy to see how this impacts us in the social media environment. To say we are tempted to use images to praise ourselves is not merely a temptation but something we have been habituated to do since we began to make and consume images in this environment. Woven into the very fabric of social media is the fundamental desire of praise. We see this in the way this environment has been structurally set up to promote

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<sup>36</sup> I do believe images we see online of a neighbor falling into sin can be used to encourage them toward a better end, but there are complexities to that digression that I do not have time for here.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, xxxvi (59).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., xxxviii (63).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., xxxvii (60).

images that have received the most praise and the way in which we are encouraged to design images that will garner the most attention. The emphasis Augustine places on this temptation suggests that images of admiration have more to do with the intent when creating and sharing them than the intent when we consume them. If the intent behind the sharing of an image is the desire for praise from people, then it could be motivated by a place of unhealthy ambition.

However, there are some practical actions we can take to help bridle this temptation of admiration in our lives. Augustine prays that God will “show me myself so that to my brothers who may pray for me I may confess what wound I am discovering in myself”.<sup>41</sup> There are two elements within this that could be helpful for our lives. The first is dialogue with God. Augustine models confessing and prayer as helpful tools for knowing what is really in our hearts. It is difficult for us to see when these temptations begin to influence our affections. Admiration is particularly blinding because it is woven to our desire to be loved. That is why the second element, a confessing community, is so important. Having outside sources like community to help us order our affections in an appropriate manner is key to not being led astray in lust for these kinds of images. Nevertheless, Augustine also notes that admiration is the “proper accompaniment” of a good life.<sup>42</sup> However, he contends that this admiration of the good life within us must be for the benefit of our neighbor. Therefore, in making images of admiration about our own lives or efforts, we should consider if the content and intent of the images will also benefit our neighbor.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., xxxvii (62).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Ultimately, relating to images through Carnal Pleasure, Curiosity, and Admiration are temptations in the social media environment. We are tempted to consume these kinds of images without consideration of what they may be trying to persuade us of. We are tempted to habituate ourselves to this “lifestyle” with images and then ordering the affections of our heart in accordance with these desires. In essence, if “out of the heart the mouth speaks” so too out of our hearts do our hands create images. It is important to be able to discern and see these types of images as we engage frequently in this environment because relating in this way is ultimately a deception.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Seeing Signs of Light

*After weathering the storms of visual sophistry, I began to see signs that a land was near. Hope blossomed within me as I considered images anew. Could I too relate to images in a new way? Could I too be free from bondage to consumption? Free! Yes, free!*

Visual Sophistry is aimed at keeping us in the world and in the images we see. They say to us: “Choose yourself. Choose what you can see. Only think on sights like me.” The problem with this is that we can begin to believe that we do not need to consider what is beyond the image in front of us. We become stuck in the world of externals, in social media, whether out of a desire related to carnal pleasure, curiosity, or ambition. The danger of spending too much of our desires with these tempting images is that we can end up neglecting wisdom, that is, our “interior life”— the place where contemplation and consideration occur, the place where we can distinguish if what we are experiencing with our sense of sight squares with what we know about right and wrong—the place of prayer. So, what do we do about it? How can we cultivate the “interior life” in our world today of mass consumption of images? Is there a kind of praise image that draws us toward wisdom—toward a positive persuasion? We are looking for a kind of image that points beyond itself. We are needing to make signs. Here I will explore three kinds of signs that can lift us: Biblical signs, living testimonies, and memories of praise.

## *Biblical Signs*

Most overtly persuasively Christian are recognizable **Biblical Signs** such as the Eucharist, Cross, Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, and Icons. The content of some of these is a kind of direct transcription so-to-speak of the Word of God. Like making a film come to life from the screenplay, these signs bring to life the Word of God. In seeing sights like these we are called to consider what is beyond the image in front of us. We are called to consider what these sights point to. Yet, what is limiting about these in the social media environment is that for them to be an affective sign, people must know what they point to when considering them. In this way, Biblical Signs primarily aim to edify the Christian Church and those already familiar with the Gospel. For those who look at this content in the social media environment without knowing the Bible, they can potentially do nothing but express the religiosity of the person who shared that content. It is like going to a foreign country where you do not know the language or customs and therefore do not know what is significant, worthy, or bad. Simply put, a language or image cannot persuade you as well if you cannot understand it. In using these signs in this environment, we must discern if they apt. It is important to recognize that the social media environment is not the Christian Church even if we presume to have a following of many Christian people or are on Christian media sites. In sum, there are certain kinds of images that may belong only in the local gathering of Gods people inside a physical church. There is a type of relationship to images we can form there that cannot be achieved on social media.

### *Living Testimonies*

There is another type of sign that seems to pierce us with a form of positive persuasion even if a person can't fully articulate the origin of that persuasion. These are **Living Testimonies**.<sup>43</sup> It is letting your light shine before others “so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”<sup>44</sup> In this way, our entire lives can become one big act of persuasion— “a testimony that draws others to grateful sharing in in God’s Love (charity)”.<sup>45</sup> This is achieved when our words and our actions come into alignment. My grandfather used to say to me “Girl, you gotta practice what you preach”. It was his way of admonishing me to live true to the words I espoused to live by. Christ, of course, is the ultimate example of a living testimony and where we draw inspiration from. His Character always matched the words he reflected. Jesus shows that “obedience to God, even to the point of dying for others as a result of their injustice, is the way that we come to share in God’s self-giving love-- God’s charity”.<sup>46</sup> It is the way we can end up directing our whole life, in word and deed, toward the praise of God. It is this reflection of the Incarnation’s impact in our lives that curates a Living Testimony.

In the social media environment this praise is reflected in images that bear witness to “righteousness”. Christ calling his disciples the light of the world is found in The Sermon on the Mount. In this discourse, Christ teaches his listeners to live a righteous life

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<sup>43</sup> This term was taken from ch.6 of Dr. Donnelly’s work *The Lost Seeds of Learning*.

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>45</sup> Donnelly, 176.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

through describing what that life looks like. In bearing witness to this way of life through our deeds matching this word, we become a living testimony. While the Sermon on the Mount is not the only place in scripture exhorting or describing to us what a righteous life looks like, it does provide a summary from which we can learn. Therefore, our images can be made to reflect deeds of righteousness. Characteristic of these testimonies will be their self-giving and others-centered nature. Often, we use social media platforms for self-serving reasons. Images of Living Testimony challenge us how to visualize and actualize self-giving.

It is important to recognize here the difference between the visual sophistry of admiration and living testimony. The Pharisees “preached but did not practice” and did “all their deeds to be seen by others” and “on the outside look[ed] righteous to others” but were really “full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Mth 23:1-37). In a word, they deceived people with their lives because they wanted to be admired—to have a superiority over others. Maybe we do this today by competing with other local churches in our marketing. Contrastingly, those associated with righteousness “walk according to the spirit” (Rom 8:4) and “humble themselves” (Luke 18: 10-14) and do justice and love mercy because they recognized Christ as their righteousness. While the Pharisees live to be admired by their own works, the righteous live to praise God through their works. Therefore, it is important to always consider what desire is motivating the image we are sharing. Through images of living testimony, we ultimately impart, similitudes of those qualities that comprised the praiseworthy life of Jesus Christ. We can bear witness to the history of the incarnation through the actions of our lives that become captured in a moment and shared in an image. We can break in the Kingdom that is coming.



## *Memories of Praise*

Whether we consciously realize it or not, images imprint themselves on our memories.<sup>47</sup> Through repetitive exposure, you remember a product and begin to want it. This is also what makes images of living testimonies so powerful. They imprint on the memories of people a way of life consistent with The Gospel. Yet, there is a way in which we can often, in the moment of capturing with our various devices an image, be unaware of how that image could point us to God. Or, because of our consumption habits of images in the social media, we often do not reflect on what was just imprinted onto our minds. Part of what is happening in Augustine's *Confessions* is his attempt to use his memories, through the act of confession, to consider who God is. In observing my own consumption of images in social media, one of the biggest ways I often neglect a move toward my "interior life" is by not recognizing how my consumption impacts my memory. This awakening of the significance came to me one morning after I woke with a song and image from social media on loop in my mind—one I had casually noticed the day before. Without fully understanding why, I woke to the jarring sounds in my head of hip-hop artist 50-Cent saying he will "take you to the candy shop". This small anecdote illustrates how we have fallen short in recognizing the power of this kind of imprinting, and how we have fallen short in better managing how to steward images that become part of our memory in order to praise God.

In my experience, we use the images we make today with our various devices as a kind of external hard drive for our memories. We make scrap books (well, we used to),

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<sup>47</sup> I cannot possibly do justice to the topic of memory in this work. It is a fascinating subject matter and most certainly impacts today in unique ways as we relate to machinery that "stores" our data aka memories.

buy more i-Cloud storage, and sometimes casually scroll through our photo app so we can go back to the memories in those images. But how can we use the important function of memory in our mind and the “memories” captured in an image to praise God?<sup>48</sup>

**Memories of Praise** are images we can look back on and see the “redemptive pattern within which we belong”.<sup>49</sup> In this way, “for Augustine, the highest use of the faculty of memory is prayer: Confessions is his life remembered as a prayer of repentance and restoration.”<sup>50</sup> So too we can look in our storehouse of amassed images and consider one of them with the memory of it in our mind in order to perceive that sight in a new way. These sights can stir us to remembrance, repentance, and restoration.

God tells the Israelites to remember what the LORD had done (Deut 6:12). Seeing an image and remembering the provision of God through it can be like when the Israelites had a Jar of manna set before them. We can be stirred by **memories of remembrance** by looking at images and considering what God has done in the past to develop our affections for God in the present.<sup>51</sup> Praising God through remembering and “considering the days of old” (ps. 77) (particularly when our present is full of feelings of trouble). The result is a recognition of Immanuel being ever present with us.

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<sup>48</sup> I recognize the danger in calling a photographic image a memory in that a photo is not functioning like an actual memory in our mind; however, rhetorically this word is used today to refer to memories recorded in a photograph.

<sup>49</sup> Bilbro, “The Ecology of Memory: Augustine, Eliot, and the Form of Wendell Berry’s Fiction” John Hopkins University Press, 65. (2016).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> This work does not have time to develop out Augustine’s notion of time as it relates to memory. However, it is important to note that for Augustine, time is a perpetual present not a linear systematic development. The title Memories of Remembrance may sound redundant, but it is really a way of acknowledging Augustine’s conception of the memory and will working together. Whereas memory may be a more “passive” consumer of sights, remembrance is a conscious choice of the will.

As we noted in the section of visual sophistry, not all images are good. Sometimes, we look back into our storehouse of images and see before us a life marred by sin and deceptions. Augustine's account in *Confessions* is full of the admittance that he is constantly falling short. However, he accounts for this by "looking to the founder and perfecter" of his faith. With **memories of repentance**, we can use an image of our past sin and consider it with confession and praise for what the Cross accomplished. In this way we are not left in the dark with our image of our sin or temptation but are brought to the light by considering that memory through the knowledge of our LORD. It is in this same way that even visual sophistry can be redeemed--"any image, any idol, can be redeemed. Even the golden calf."<sup>52</sup> There is no sight that can deceive us where redemption cannot find us.

The beautiful truth of the Gospel and its good news is that the world was not left in its sin. There is a kingdom breaking in that we get to participate in through the restoration of our lives back into the image of God. **Memories of restoration** enable us to see how this is taking place through our own changed worlds.<sup>53</sup> It is like seeing someone you know be transformed through putting their faith in Jesus—it is new life breaking in. It is like watching the leaves of a tree turn from winter to spring and being in awe of both the tiny buds and full flowers. Memories of restoration act as a kind of healing contrast. Augustine says, in his work *De Trinitate*, "that the whole point of faith is that man actually *be healed through his experience of temporal things*."<sup>54</sup> Our

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<sup>52</sup> Carnes, *Image and Presence*, 178.

<sup>53</sup> I use the term world here to encompass the ways in which we can see through images the restoration of not only ourselves but also the "neighbors" and family members present in our own lives.

<sup>54</sup> Hochschild, *Perfection of Memory in the Vision of God: De trinitate*, 213.

experiences captured in images can be used to perceive this healing aim by using our memory and will to consider how the content of the images, or the content not present, fits in to an eschatological framework. To consider the fullness of restoration requires both the past, present, and future to be considered all together. This is what we can do through the power of our memory. This is how we can see “past” images as we consider them in the “present” and see the “future” breaking in either through physically discernable change or through the promise of it. Whether we are sharing our memories or living out our testimony through a being light on social media, we can begin to cultivate a relationship to images in this space of social media in a new way. They can be signs that cultivate a deeper level of consideration.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Land of Light

*As I journeyed closer to shore, I heard the waves singing holy, holy, holy and saw a radiant light beaming forth that made me squint and look dimly on toward the land. My whole body filled with a jubilant tremor as I sailed toward the awe. I was close to the end, but somehow felt this was just the beginning.*

One of the problems of social media is that our sense of sight presumes knowledge of something in a way that none of our other senses, except sound, can offer. In consuming images on social media, we are importing to our memory sights that are experientially incomplete. Because of this, in my memory, it's as if I have some actual knowledge of Bora Bora. Of course, I did not smell the air of Bora Bora or have an experience beyond the image, but now when someone says to me Bora Bora, I can think on the only sliver of knowledge I do have of this place. As we constantly and rapidly consume images on social media, we impart to our memory images of something and a kind of knowledge of it. Yet, that image is incomplete—we have not really seen the object it is depicting. By not fully considering what it is we have seen, or what we still lack sight of, we invite into our memories a partial rendering of something. The temptation is to presume to have seen the fullness of an object while only ever having seen a part.

In Christian ministry I fear that we often do not take this partiality of social media into account. Jesus often showed through his life that nearness matters. Physical proximity to an object matters. People had the greatest encounters with Christ when they

were near Him. This is why I am weary of Christian social media platforms. Love for our neighbor must not be considered fully achievable through the means of social media. At some point, loving requires a co-laboring and a co-passion. Although Paul could write letters and share his life to edify Christians far away, he does not long to remain away from the intimate physical gathering of the people of God. His letters call out people by name and describes actions of specific people in detail. He knew those he loved. What this demonstrates to me is the primacy of physical proximity to fulfill our obligation of loving our neighbor well. There is a way in which social media can tempt us as Christians to be lazy. We perceive reaching as many people with an image as “mission accomplished”. Yet, I would warn that unless our words are accompanied by a living action outside the social media environment than we are nothing more than “clanging cymbals”. Often, I fear what we try and share in social media is noise that sounds loving but that does little to love. Even in our images of Living Testimony, we have only imparted a likeness to Justice or a likeness to Mercy. But loves desire never ends with a likeness of ourselves. We want fullness.

Moreover, when we begin to see the world as an image of God it begets “resisting the will to master the world”.<sup>55</sup> Yet, inherent to the structure of social media, is the ability for us to master our own little worlds. If I cannot get admiration from an outside source, I can always turn to social media and share an image I know people would like so that I can satisfy a craving in myself for admiration. I can create and build a whole “platform” and be a “master” of my own world. I can build a church brand and following. The temptation is to idolize our own platforms—serving them to master them. Yet, God’s

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<sup>55</sup> Carnes. *Images and Presence*, 176.

Kingdom is described as Meek and Humble. Walter Brueggemann describes the Pathos of Jesus as someone who “dismantled the dominant culture and nullified its claims” by critiquing it through “his decisive solidarity with marginal people and the accompanying vulnerability required through that solidarity”.<sup>56</sup> He goes on to assess how that vulnerability was costly and suggests that “empires live by numbness” and are never built “on the basis of compassion”.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Christ reveals through his stories like the Good Samaritan that “the capacity to feel the hurt of the marginal people means an end to all social arrangements that nullified pain by a remarkable depth of numbness”.<sup>58</sup> I am weary of the many ways in which social media numbs us to compassion and enslaves to our own worlds. By making images of living testimonies and memories of praise, perhaps we can break through this collective numbness and stir compassion on the platform. We must get out, get up, go love—even in a digital world.

Nevertheless, this sense of likenesses on social media found in images is also something we experience outside of social media. We are constantly exposed to only a perspective at a moment in time. As mere creatures we cannot possibly see the fullness of anything. That is part of what makes faith so powerful is that it is the acknowledgement of our limited sight while putting hope in the one who can see all (Job 28:24, Jer 23:24). The aim of this work was to provide a lens of discernment to see how praise is affecting us and effecting others in the social media environment. Yet, it is important to realize that the light we ultimately long for is already and not yet before us. Our sight longs to see

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<sup>56</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 82.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

that which we love. While here on earth, we look through a foggy mirror toward our hope. There are signs that can point us to contemplation of that light we should love, but these signs are not ultimately that sight.

Then, what is ultimately the light we love when we love our God? I do not fully know yet. But it is something like peace. It is something like gentleness. It is something like the character of Jesus. It is, “the paradox that our true existence is (in a sense) outside ourselves”.<sup>59</sup> We find this existence by drawing near to that Image that came to earth for our sakes. We walk currently in this life as if standing outside in sunlight with our eyes closed and feeling the radiating warmth of the sun on our skin. One day, we will open our eyes and see what we have felt and known to be love all along.

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<sup>59</sup> C.E. Rolt, *Dionysius The Areopagite*, 32.



## Epilogue

### Living out our Testimonies with Images

I sat before an icon of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi and did something I had never done before—I used an icon to pray. It was the first time in my whole life that I had ever felt connected to God in prayer through a still image and through contemplating Mary. Soft, gentle, feminine, peaceable, and marvelous. I may never have prayed with this image had I not just spent a week in the village of Cortona admiring the church built in honor of Saint Margaret. There I was, a girl, standing inside a Christian church built in honor of a woman's testimony! I had never been in a church built because of what a woman did in honor and praise of God. I felt encouraged in my faith. In this moment, I formed a new relationship with images. When my gaze drew away from fading frescoes and toward my flight back home, I found myself in a post-modern world, full of more images than ever, yet dominated by a laissez-faire approach to their meaning. Moreover, these images on social media and in my own church did not seem to have been made for a purpose of *contemplation* but rather for *consumption*. As I sat inundated with images on social media, I yearned for that bench next to the Icon of Mary and wondered: could I create an image that helped people have a contemplative encounter with God? Is there a way to use my familiar medium of the photograph to achieve this? Drawing from the tradition of iconography and blending it with photography I began experimenting, and continue to experiment, with the creation of contemplative photographic images. In essence, I wondered how my iconophilia could

impact the kinds of photographs I could make and, if by some mercy, God might use the photograph to communicate His divine presence.

Joseph Pieper, in his collection of thoughts, *Only the Lover Sings* asserts that humankind's ability to see is in decline because of visual noise and to combat this we need to create because creating requires contemplating. Creating has been an aid to my contemplation helping me toe the line between theoretical and pragmatic. One of the greatest difficulties I first encountered in creating a contemplative sacred photograph was my desire to adhere to and root myself in the tradition of iconography but lacking guidance for how a photograph could draw from this form. What stylistic elements of the tradition of the icon can inform the making of photographic images? Relying on Egon Sendler's book *The Icon*, I first began to wonder how I could depict the spiritualization of humankind. Large foreheads, perfectly geometric shapes, canons of color—all elements at play in the icon. I wondered how to fit these into the photograph which was made to capture an image of reality as it stands in that moment of time—in the present. This ability of photography was also what I wanted to subdue—for life really is more than what meets our eyes. In the collection of images, I have made so far, I focused on how Jesus says he is present in the poor and marginalized (Mathew 25) and in those who come to faith (Galatians 4:19). As I ministered to my neighbor in need or came together in the company of the faithful, I tried to illustrate them for who they really are so others might consider them anew. In this way, I was most concerned with making prosoponic likeness visible. To achieve this, I have, so far relied on the halo, a Photoshop smudge technique, and accounting for proportions and geometric shapes in the framing of my shots.

The other difficulty was and is a lack of clear guidance for where an image like this belongs. While many people, especially my age, consume most of their images on social media, I was concerned this space would make contemplating more challenging. What we see on social media has often been made *for* social media. Sizing, design, video lengths, captions—all of these are elements that serve social media. Space is important and so is how we consume what we see, and I do not find that the environment of social media has been set up to encourage contemplation. So, although my research focuses on social media, I would consider most of the images I have made so far as not being apt for it because the purpose of images for contemplation and for consumption are almost entirely incongruous.

So where should these images be seen? In what venue or medium? In church? With God's people? I hope this technique of seeing anew the photographic image will prompt people to make their own images specific to their ecclesial context. I also hope this kind of photograph might illuminate the dignity of the marginalized and poor such that their place in church is elevated. I think our ministries to the poor would look different if we saw them in the light of Christ instead of as merely "*needy*". If the poor truly do bear the prosopon of Christ then what beauty, they must bear!

On the other hand, with images of living testimony, I have chosen not to include some of the stylistic elements because I believe these images can work well on social media and speak to all regardless of a background as a Christian. Like walking by something fragrant briefly or the residue of something tasty in our mouths, living testimonies use the strengths of the photograph to depict in time the bearing of good fruit.

For these, I focused on recording moments in which my neighbors were bearing good fruit, employing perspective as my primary stylistic tool.

Memories of praise operate almost like a devotional. Photographs capturing a present moment can be seen again considering where the viewer is now. I can see a photograph being used in congruence with something like the Daily Examen by exploring both the limitations of the photograph itself and how that photograph could stir gratitude and convey presence. What memories in our mind are missing from the photograph? What sensory experiences? What does the image do a good job of conveying?

Ultimately, by considering and contemplating, a new relationship to images emerged for me. As someone who grew up on social media, this kind of experience was revelatory. I have become concerned, as have many others, with social media and its impact on us. As the image continues to play an increasingly dominant role in our lives, it's more important than ever to be able to understand what we are seeing. The humanities are integral to understanding the way humans will form relationships to technological phenomenon. Great texts are integral to understanding our relationships to technological phenomenon. Our capacity to contemplate and from that contemplation to create, will underpin it all.

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