

The Evil Side of Artistic

February 12th, 2012

First, The Case for the Godly Artist

The Spirit of God Labors in the Artistic

And Moses said to the children of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship. And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen, and of the weaver--those who do every work and those who design artistic works. And Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded.

Exodus 35:30 - 36:1

The Artist from Judah

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

A Deviant Artistry

A look into the perversion of the notion of artistic

Eric the Artist

Being likeable and attractive to the culture is the Christian's highest aim

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Isaiah 53:2

Eric the Communicator

avoid certainty or preachiness at all costs

(1 Corinthians 1:17) For Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

(1:18) the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness

(1:21) it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

(1:23) we preach Christ crucified - a stumbling block and . . . foolishness

Idiōtēs - ē-dē-ō'-tās

seemingly unlearned, appearing unskilled, and lacking intelligence

But though I be *idiōtēs* in speech . . .

2 Corinthians 11:6

Eric, the Post-Modern Christian

The great aim of the Christian evangelist is to find ways to take the culture (movies, music, and literature) and make it the vehicle through which to engage the non-Christian with the ideas of Jesus.

Eric, The One Refusing to be Foolish

The motto: somehow make this awkward thing known as Christianity cool

We are fools for Christ's sake . . .

1 Corinthians 4:10a

- Christ Crucified (a stumbling block, foolishness)
- The Gospel (the foolishness of God)
- The Things of the Spirit of God (they are foolishness to natural man)
- Preaching (foolishness)
- The Preacher (weak, contemptible, unskilled - a.k.a. foolish)

Paul - his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

2 Corinthians 10:10

The Exaltation of “Artistic” above “Jesus”

The Post-Modern Message

I come to you certain of absolutely nothing, but I do have a hug to offer, a lotus position to stick you in, some poetry by Gerard Manley Hopkins to recite, and some soft new age music playing in the background.

1 Emergent 2:2

The Apostle Paul's Message

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:2

The Artistic Haven

The Modern Means of Experiencing God

The Post-Modern Christian needs an Artistic Haven in which to encounter God. Outside of the Artistic Haven, God is dull and lifeless and completely unexciting.

Classic Artistic Havens

- Movies (Movies speak to my soul - the Bible doesn't)
- Music (If I don't have music playing, I can't focus, I can't think straight, I can't engage with God)
- Poetry (without some lyricism, things of God just don't excite me)
- Location (I'm only inspired when I'm in Paris)
- Atmosphere (I can only work in an artistic coffee shop, I can only pray in a stain-glassed cathedral)
- Community (I only feel alive while in a community of like-minded artists seeking mystery)

The Danger of the Artistic Haven

When Artistry becomes the primary objective in the Christian life (in other words, to experience God in a movie, music, poetry, a certain location, a specific atmosphere, or a defined community), then Truth takes a lesser position than the Artistic Haven. When the Artistic Haven becomes the pursuit rather than Jesus Christ, then the erosion of truth is now justified under the pretense of “Artistic license.” Art is of higher value than Truth.

Throwing Off All “Traditional” Restraint

The Post-Modern Artist

He or she is free to explore, live out, think through, muse on, paint up, and poetically enunciate new ideas and new concepts without the dogged restraints of traditional bias and long-held Biblical definition holding them back (i.e. - the true artist has escaped from the “Mom conscience”).

Freedom Redefined

Freedom to the post-modern is being finally unshackled from the hand-cuffs of traditional understanding, no longer restrained by the moral requirements of “mom,” and no longer ashamed and convicted over what the Bible clearly enunciates as sin.

- **Angsty is Hip.** If I think a thought, no matter if the thought contradicts and challenges all the traditional moorings and moral building blocks of a Judeo-Christian worldview, I should entertain the thought, I should speak forth the thought, paint it, put melody to it, sing it, write it, put it in prose, and/or even sculpt it.
- **Go with it.** If I feel a feeling, a longing, or an urge, no matter if the feeling (longing or urge) violates that which has been taught me as proper in the Biblical framework, I should express it, yell it, indulge it, embrace it, and/or cultivate it.
- **Self is Central.** If I don’t let the thoughts, the feelings, longings, and urges out, I am repressing my real, true self. And my real true self must get out, it must be known, it must be expressed.

Biblical Freedom

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . .
Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8:32,36

And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.

Psalm 119:45

The Wild Conclusions of the Post-Modern Christian

For the sake of God, and under the banner of love and freedom let us cast off any moral restraint or archaic Biblical mandate that would impede the arts, hinders authentic expressions of faith, and block the voicing of Self.

The Open-Mind versus the Canon-Mind

The Open Mind (aka The Artistic Mind)

The Open Mind craves mystery and disdains conciseness and concreteness. It has turned off all filtering restraint and thusly is willing to explore new and previously forbidden ideas and cultivate thoughts that otherwise would be deemed false and dangerous. It's willing to challenge the age-old Biblical ideas and pose the question . . . "Is that really what God said?"

The Canon-Mind

The Canon-Mind is a mind given wholly to God, implicitly trusting God's definition of reality, exclusively devoted to God's opinion and command, closed to all thoughts, ideas, or philosophies that would lead the mind to another take on reality. The Canon Mind is a mind built on God's Word as if it were in fact, the Word of God. The Canon Mind is built upon the rock-like conviction that God's Word is the perfect revelation of Fact - it cannot lie and is 100% Truth. And the Canon Mind knows that God intends His Word to be comprehended by His saints, understood by His saints, and lived out by His saints. The Canon Mind is not open to any

thought, notion, or definition of reality that is not 100% concurrent with the Revelation of God's Word.

One more look at the Open Mind

It's willing to challenge the age-old Biblical ideas and pose the question . . . "Is that really what God said?"

The Crafty Voice

Calling into Question the Obvious Truth, Beckoning a more Generous Understanding of the Clear Command

Did God really say that?

- The Serpent

Now the serpent was more **subtle** (cunning, shrewd, and crafty) than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, **Yea, hath God said?**

Genesis 3:1

The Age-Old Question

Posed in a million different satanic ways

- Is that really what God said?
- Is that really what God meant?
- Are you sure you aren't bringing your greco-roman platonic thinking into your understanding of that text?
- Are you sure this was even written by God?
- Wasn't this verse added years later?
- Hasn't there been a long dispute over that particular book's inclusion in the Canon?
- Didn't some of the most reliable manuscripts not include that verse?
- But does that verse really match with Jesus' message of love and kindness?
- Would a loving God actually say that?

- Can Truth really even be known?
- Do you really believe that God would limit himself to be defined by the parameters of such a small and decidedly human work of literature?
- Hath God said? - KJV
- Has God indeed said? - NKJV
- Did God really say? - NIV
- Did God actually say? - ESV
- Indeed, has God said? - NASB
- Did God say? - RSV
- Is it true that God hath said? - YNG

Lucifer

Bringer of Light

But this light is a false light, that has a singular intention in its illumination - and that is to question the Words of God. Did God really say? It's illumination of an insidious nature.

You were the anointed cherub who covers . . . Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; **You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor . . .**

Ezekiel 28:14,17

A Quick Review

Here's how the lie goes . . .

- If I think a thought, no matter if the thought contradicts and challenges all the traditional moorings and moral building blocks of a Judeo-Christian worldview, I should entertain the thought, I should speak forth the thought, paint it, put melody to it, sing it, write it, put it in prose, and/or even sculpt it.
- If I feel a feeling, a longing, or an urge, no matter if the feeling (longing or urge) violates that which has been taught me as proper in the Biblical framework, I should express it, yell it, indulge it, embrace it, and/or cultivate it.

- If I don't let the thoughts, the feelings, longings, and urges out, I am repressing my real, true self. And my real true self must get out, it must be known, it must be expressed.

Now the serpent was more **subtle** (cunning, shrewd, and crafty)
than any beast of the field . . .

Genesis 3:1

Dolos - Do'-los

Craft, Subtlety, Guile - To lure, to catch with bait

. . . the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take
him by **Dolos**, and put Him to death.

Mark 14:1

The Sinister Make-Up of Dolos

1. An ounce of Guile
2. A dollop of Subtlety
3. A pinch of Craftiness

Guile

Craft; cunning; **artifice**; duplicity; deceit

Guileful

Cunning; crafty; **artful**; wily

Subtlety

Sly in design; **artful**; cunning; so delicate or precise
as to be difficult to analyze or describe; making use of clever

and indirect methods to achieve something; its origin in the Middle English means *not easily understood*.

Craft

Cunning, **art or skill**, in a bad sense, or applied to bad purposes; **artifice**; guile; **skill or dexterity** employed to effect purposes by deceit; **to play tricks**.

Crafty, Craftiness

Cunning; **artful**; skillful in devising and pursuing a scheme, by deceiving others, or by taking advantage of their ignorance; wily; sly; fraudulent; clever at achieving one's aims by indirect or deceitful methods.

Craftily

With **craft**, cunning or guile; **artfully**; cunningly; **with more art than honesty**.

The Post-Modern Christian

Christianity with more art than honesty, more guile than Truth.

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in **craftiness** nor handling the word of God [with] **Doloō**, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:2

Who did no sin, neither was **Dolos** found in his mouth:

Purposeful Ambiguity

I have gone out of my way to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear, reflecting my belief that clarity is sometimes overrated, and that shock, obscurity, playfulness, and intrigue (carefully articulated) often stimulate more thought than clarity.

Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 23

Pinpointing with any precision McLaren's position on doctrine has its challenges for two reasons. First, his beliefs are often communicated through fictional characters that embrace just enough agreement from both sides of a position that the reader is left wondering exactly where the author stands. He even warns against associating his personal position on a subject with that of the total viewpoint of any one of his characters. These fictional characters, vacillating between agreement and disagreement, present a hallmark trait of his writing style. Second, McLaren strategically seems to place sentences in his writings that enable him to refute any critic that seeks to pinpoint his theological convictions. This method of communicating allows him to own a particular theological position while also maintaining an alliance with the opposing side of the argument. For McLaren, to be for one principle does not mean opposing its opposite.

John S. Bohannon, *Preaching and the Emergent Church*, 61

A Quick Look at the Effects of Dolos upon the Truth

The Bible

Their serpentine question: Is it really God's Word? Are you sure it isn't just the words of good intentioned men?

The Bible never calls itself the foundation (1) . . . The Bible is more a question book than answer book (2) . . . The Bible seems to explore mystery, not clarify it (3) . . . The facts are not as important as the feelings, and postmoderns tend to “feel after him.” (4)

Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 163 (1); *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 82 (2); Fictional character named Neo (a.k.a. Brian McLaren), *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 82 (3); *A is for Abductive*, 119-123 (4)

The more I learn from Jesus, the more I cringe when I read passages in Exodus or Joshua where the God of love and universal compassion, to whom Jesus has introduced me, **allegedly** commands what today we would call brutality, chauvinism, ethnic cleansing, or holocaust.

Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 185

I see the Bible changing. I don't see it as stagnant and so for us, as a community of Christians, to say we need to believe this one thing and hold to it tightly and make sure it's never questioned, that's a real waste of energy with all the things we could be doing in the world.”

**Member of Doug Pagitt's church, Solomon's Porch,
in video entitled, “Spiritual Revolution.”**

Truth

The facts are not as important as the feelings, and postmoderns tend to “feel after him.”

Brian McLaren, *A is for Abductive*, 119-123

Thy word is truth.

John 17:17

The Goodness of Man

Their serpentine question: Is it true that men are sinful? Couldn't it be that we are only misguided and in need of loving acceptance? Is it not true that we possess within ourselves a beauty, a glory, a rightness, a godness?

We can say we believe that humanity is evil and depraved and that we enter the world this way. But I don't think this fits the Christian story, nor do many of us truly hold to it.

Doug Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 124

[Humankind is created as] God's partners, not God's enemies. Sin does a lot of damage to that partnership - it disables us, it discourages us, it disturbs us - but it never destroys the bond that exists between God and humanity . . . [Humankind is] inherently godly . . . [and offers] God-inspired goodness.

Doug Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 153

We affirm our divinity by doing what is worthy of gods . . . Robert Schuller affirms our divinity, yet does not deny our humanity . . . isn't that what the gospel is?

Tony Campolo

The hymn writer who taught us to sing "Amazing Grace" was all too ready to call himself a "wretch" . . . forgetting our divinity . . . Erich Fromm (NOTE: who, by the way is a godless atheist and author of *Ye Shall Be as God*), one of the most popular psychoanalysts of our time, recognized the diabolical social consequences that can come about when a person loses sight of his/her own divinity.

Tony Campolo, *Partly Right*

The Cross

Their serpentine question: Is a God of love really going to pour out wrath upon His own son? Don't you think we should try and make this whole "cross affair" a bit less bloody?

[On the subject of penal substitutionary atonement - or Jesus taking our rightful penalty for sin and absorbing the wrath of God upon the Cross] That sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse. You know?

Brian McLaren

Penal Substitutionary Atonement is . . . cosmic child abuse - a vengeful father, punishing his son for an offense he has not even committed. [it is] a theory rooted in violence and retributive notions of justice' and is incompatible 'at least as currently taught and understood, with any authentically Christian understanding of the character of God.

Steve Chalke

(The United Kingdom's Brian McLaren)

The Lost Message of Jesus

The Position of Self

Their serpentine question: Did you not know that you could be as God?

I'm trying (with Ken Wilber's help) to make clear that I believe there is something above and beyond the current alternatives of modern fundamentalism/absolutism and pluralistic relativism.

Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Chapter 19

For a mind-blowing introduction into emergent thinking and divine creativity he advises his audience to spend three months at the feet of Ken Wilber.

Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 192

The Gospel

Their serpentine question: Is that really what Jesus came to accomplish?

Let's suppose a TV news reporter walked up to Jesus and said, "Jesus, we have thirty seconds before the commercial break. Can

you tell us in a sentence or two what your message is about?”
What would he say?”

“Everyone needs to rethink their lives as individuals, and we need to rethink our direction as a culture and imagine an unimagined future for our world,” he might say. “Because the kingdom of God is here. You can count on this.”

Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 50

It’s an invitation for all nations, races, classes, and religions to participate in this network of dynamic, interactive relationships with God . . . this gospel, or secret message of Jesus uncovered, unites peoples on a peaceful journey to bring healing, love, justice, mercy, humility, reconciliation, and hope to the world . . . the Kingdom of God, then, is a revolutionary, counter-cultural movement - proclaiming a ceaseless rebellion against the tyrannical trinity of money, sex, and power . . . and a breaking down of injustices such as racism, nationalism, consumerism, colonialism, and self-destructive ecosystems.

Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 79, 134

I would say that history is headed somewhere. The thousands of little ways in which you are tempted to believe that hope might actually be a legitimate response to the insanity of the world actually can be trusted. And the Christian story is that a tomb is empty, and a movement has actually begun that has been present in a sense all along in creation. And all those times when your cynicism was at odds with an impulse within you said that this little thing might be about something bigger - those tiny slivers may in fact be connected to something really, really big.

Rob Bell, *The Giant Story*, April 2009, Christianity Today

The Man, Jesus

Their serpentine question: Is there really a necessity that we push the fact that he was supposedly born of a virgin? Does it really matter if we claim he was God in the flesh? Doesn’t

it seem a bit preposterous that we have to believe he supposedly rose from the dead to be included in the community of those who call themselves Christian?

I know that rethinking the nature of God, the state of humanity, the essence of sin, leads to rethinking Jesus.

Doug Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 174

[The church today is probably preaching] too much Jesus at the expense of the Kingdom of God.

Doug Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 218

The End Result

When the Word of God in textual form is diminished, it leads to a diminishment of the Word of God in person - Jesus Christ.

Now the serpent was more **subtle** (cunning, shrewd, and crafty) than any beast of the field . . .

Genesis 3:1

And consulted that they might take Jesus by **subtlety**, and kill him.

Matthew 26:4

3 Elements of Heavenly Artistry

Element One: Beauty

God is the Author of Beauty. God never makes junk, and neither should the Christian. God does everything with excellence, order, and beauty and so ought His children. But our God is not averse to making things the world deems foolish.

Element Two: Glory

Everything that is truly lovely is lovely because it reveals the Glory of God. The Christian expresses their artistry for the Glory of King Jesus alone and not ever for the carnal expression and glorification of Self.

Element Three: Purity

Purity of motive and purity of expression is a hallmark of everything born of the Spirit of God. God never bears the manner, scent, or pattern of the world, but is holy, holy, holy. The Christian is without guile, subtlety, craft, and deceit in their artistry. They wield the power of artistry only for the clarification of God's rocklike Truth and never to make it fuzzy or indiscernible.

We Must Brave the Foolish Path

The Danger of the Artistic Haven

When Artistry becomes the primary objective in the Christian life (in other words, to experience God in a movie, music, poetry, a certain location, a specific atmosphere, or a defined community), then Truth takes a lesser position than the Artistic Haven. When the Artistic Haven becomes the pursuit rather than Jesus Christ, then the erosion of truth is now justified under the pretense of "Artistic license." Art is of higher value than Truth.

The Power of the Christ Haven

When Jesus becomes the primary objective in the Christian life (in other words, to live with Jesus, know Jesus, be found in Jesus, be filled with Jesus, honor Jesus, and bring glory to Jesus), then Truth takes a higher position than Self-interest, Self-expression, and Self-comfort. When the Christ-Haven becomes the pursuit rather than Artistry, Hipness, and Self, then the soul is set free, joy flows unabated, peace passes all understanding, and love now has a proper channel through which to work. Truth is of higher value than art, and this is of perfect beauty in Heaven's eyes.

Paul's Singular Focus

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Philippians 3:8-10

1. That I may win Christ
2. That I may be found in Him
3. That I may know him
4. That I may know the power of His resurrection
5. That I may know the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death