

SEARCH *for* TRUTH

a BOOK *of* PROSE
concerning matters of faith and art

written by
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Chapter 1

Reflections

On Faith and Religion

Caught in their little lie, I wonder how many more lies have they pulled on me? How many more untruths have I accepted? So I threw away all I knew, hoping to be rid of any more falsehoods circulating in my brain. The only truths I am now certain of is that Jesus, God the Son, provided salvation for myself and all mankind, and that the Bible is the word of God.

I become so disgusted by the many atrocities of our faith. What was once so beautiful and so pure, is so horribly desecrated. All the fallacies that are spewed from so-called Godly people enrages me. Often I feel our faith has lost its true vision. Man has tainted it, presenting a faith that is no longer the relationship expressed in the Bible. What a depressing tragedy.

Many men put up their reflections of God. All are distorted or are even mirrors of themselves. Some are close to the visage of God, while others are completely unrecognizable. Everyone creates their own reflection that suits their own needs. None of us really do see a completely identical image of God.

I want to know the true face of God. I want to bypass the reflections and go straight to the source, to God. But how can one reach this God? I could read the Bible on my own, but it still does not guarantee an accurate picture of God. I cannot trust myself on this path. I could create a God of my liking, just as the reflectors do. I might only chose the reflection I like best, a reflection that is not at all identical with the true face of God. It is still very beneficial to read the Bible for yourself, but you need to be able to face the harsh realities written, and accept them. There will be times when you want to reject what the Bible says. God's thoughts are not your thoughts. You will only be able to grow, have a deeper relationship with the Creator if you accept the truths and renew your mind. Otherwise you will remain as you are, lost and distant from God, continuing on your carnal way.

Another problem arises from only personal study. God apparently has

given some the gift of preaching. Those select people are helped by God to understand Scripture more fully. Most do not have this gift, and I am doubtful I do, so one would be missing a lot by sole personal reading. This problem means I must pick from the reflectors, a.k.a. pastors. Again, I cannot trust myself. I might just pick the reflection that I favor most, not the reflection that most resembles God. I can only hope God leads me to a pastor that really does have a good heart, one that truly knows God.

I often become very discouraged in my search for truth. To be a Christian is not what it was originally was meant to be. Sometimes I am ashamed of being a Christian, because of what the other "Christians" do, and by what "Christian" means today. "Christianity" connotes rules, legalism, and closed-mindedness. These suggestions are not what Christianity was not supposed to be.

Often times I am so repulsed by this now man tainted religion, I no longer want to be known as a Christian, I want to be more known as a follower of Jesus, a disciple, a chaser of God, someone who is seriously seeking a relationship with God. I want to be rid of all false preconceived notions, to be only filled with truth. I want to cut away the flesh, and go straight to the bone. I want true faith. I most desperately want to know God. Oh, how I most desperately desire a relationship with God.

Chapter 2

Losing Art

On Worship and Art

Often times I find that God speaks to me much louder through art than any sermon could. Through music and visual art, God has become much more real than I have ever experienced. Yet none of these experiences have ever occurred within a church.

Upon mentioning music, one might assume I have been touched by the sort of worship music that is played in almost every church. Unfortunately, this could not be further from the truth. Although I too join in the singing these songs at chapel along with everyone else, inside my heart cries for a much more fulfilling experience, both spiritually and ascetically. I simply find worship music uninteresting, incapable of generating a response from me. Although I do understand it does affect many positively, I cannot help but note how unimaginative and repetitive the music is. "We love You Lord, we love You, we love You" being repeated multiple times becomes very monotonous. Words such as these are very simple and provoke no thought at all. Often the songs drag. The music is safe, it does not excite, it keeps a more consistent feeling throughout.

I do realize it is not about the music, it is indeed about worship, but can't worship contain high quality art? Why should we settle for the second best on the art side of worship? Does not God deserve first rate artistry as we worship Him? Church worship does not compare to the times I have felt God through songs, and I deeply wish worship music could have such an affect on me. However I do know that everyone is different, and I understand that the worship found in church is a perfect match for some.

I think the worship music gets too focused in deliberately glorifying God, they lose the art. I find it very interesting that no unsaved person would ever listen to worship music. Only Christians listen to worship music. This music is scoffed at, ridiculed by the unsaved. Some would assume that the love of God is being too firmly expressed, and they are rejecting the music because of this. However, it is clear that the unsaved are more interested in the sound,

not the message. They are attacking the sound more than the lyrics. They do not care what the lyrics are, as long as the music is good. A lot of unbelievers listen to a band as long as the band is good, despite the Christian lyrics. P.O.D. and Chevelle are among the Christian artists that are popular to secular audiences. Christians are too busy appreciating the lyrics, they look past the lack of artistic genius.

I believe that music in Christianity has not reached its full potential. Lots of Christian artists have come from church worship bands and only continue the music I have described above. They follow the same formula contained in worship music. Granted, music in Christianity has advanced greatly. Christian music used to only mean the traditional hymns, but now there are several genres, from soft acoustic, hip-hop, to heavy metal. However, the more diverse forms of music are still not quite accepted among Christians. Christians question whether the music is Christian, despite the obviously spiritual lyrics. A sound does not designate right or wrong. Is the sound of the ocean Godly? Is the sound of an alarm evil? How can something be rendered righteous solely by noise? The Bible never describes an evil sort of music. The sound of music is neutral, it is the only the words that truly decide whether the music rots or enhances one's mind. It is only culture and personal preference that condemns a style of music, not God.

I am always disappointed to find that worship does not do the trick for me, especially since I have experienced such before. I know that music can excite a much more passionate response. I personally find sitting in my own home, listening to some hardcore with deep, thought provoking spiritual lyrics much more inspiring. I know that there are musicians that really create awesome art with a great message, and I worship with them better than at chapel. They give me the balance of art and faith that I crave. From my own musical collection I worship God much more fully. Although I may find worship at home with my personal collection, it does not mean everyone should worship the same way I do. Everyone is different and worships differently. I just wish that worship music would adopt a higher standard of artistry.

Chapter 3

Truth Emerging

On Faith and Art

Marrying of faith and art is difficult ground. Madeline L'Engle offers an interesting idea on the subject. In her book, *Walking on Water*, L'Engle proposes that one does not need to deliberately make Christian art for it to be Christian. If one's heart truly loves God, it will naturally come out through one's art. I had read this book at a very timely period. I had begun to think that I should purposely make Christian art. I desire to affect people through my art, and inspire spiritual awareness. I hope that through my art, someone will encourage someone to think about God. Upon further reflection with L'Engle's theory, I tend to agree with her. Art that is made to be Christian tends to be less effective. There is no depth to the message, it is much more superficial. The art is usually boring and cannot hold one's attention for long.

I decided to practice L'Engle's theory. I would not worry about implementing a Christian theme into my artwork. I would just create what I needed to create. I would just listen to my natural artistic processes. In this manner, I have created some of my most rewarding artwork. Oddly enough, they all have a faith based theme, even though I never consciously told myself this is what I would do. I just naturally want to express what I am going through, and a lot of what I am going through involves my faith. My faith just unavoidably comes out.

I most remember my first piece with L'Engle's idea in mind. Never have I felt closer to God than this. I felt as though God was with me, kissing me as I made these pieces. It was a seven piece final in which I explored how God deals with His own creations. I expressed the desperate desire to know Him. I really enjoyed making the pieces and I learned a lot about my relationship with God. Oh, it was such a wonderful experience! It is amusing that I intended to minister to others through my art, yet I am being ministered myself by God through it.

God also reaches me with other people's art. Music greatly influences

me. It opened my eyes to my faith. Although I had been saved at a very early age, I had never actively pursued a relationship with God. I was listening to secular music and stumbled upon a Christian band. This band soon became my favorite band and I began listening to them constantly. The messages in the songs rubbed off on me and I began to embrace my faith. God used this band to minister to me, to call me to Him. From then on, I only listen to music with deep spiritual lyrics. Music still has a great hold on me. God often uses a song to have me realize a truth. Songs help me grasp a truth, it helps me apply my faith much more easily.

Faith is something important to me, it is something I deal with always. I find truth through art. Often times art has become a way of reaching God, a way to understand my faith. Art has a healing ability. God uses artists to minister to others. I believe that God knows me, much better than I know myself, and knows exactly how to reach me: through art.