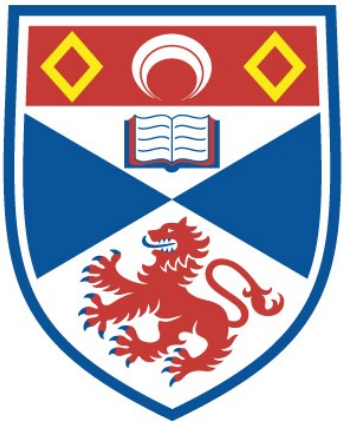
TURNING DELIGHT INTO SACRIFICE : BEAUTY, GIFT, METAPHOR AND THE RECOVERY OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

Ryan V. Moore

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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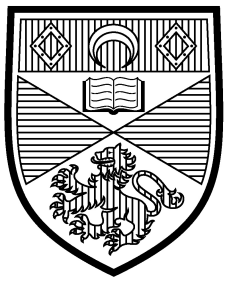

University of
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ABSTRACT

By many accounts North American Protestant pastors are in crisis. Some would suggest that this crisis is due to the increasing hardships brought about by the end of Christendom in the West. However, placing pastors in a narrative of mounting marginalization and victimization does not explain the vibrant and dynamic nature of pastoral ministry in other times and in other global contexts that are less than optimal.

Instead, this project argues that pastoral identity suffers, at the hands of modern metaphors for ministry, because those metaphors fail to cultivate the pastor's ability to behold Beauty. To say this is to make the bold claim that the crisis facing pastoral identity is at its heart a crisis of aesthetics; by which I mean, the ability of pastors to apprehend, through the senses, the beauty of God and God's world revealed supremely in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

This project is organized in three parts: Beauty, Gift, and Metaphor. The first section traces the loss of Beauty in the world and in the parish. It explores what difference this has made to pastoral ministry as it relates to the pursuit of the two other transcendentals, Truth and Goodness. Second, with the lost ability to behold the Beauty of the Lord comes an anemic understanding of pastoral ministry as *charism* or Gift. The result is a loss of joy (Nehemiah 8:10). Lastly, the third section argues that recovery of a vigorous pastoral identity and ministry requires (1) an honest evaluation of the modern metaphors exerting influence on clergy, (2) a grounding back in the ancient biblical and extra-biblical metaphors that have sustained pastors, and (3) the exploration of new metaphors for ministry that can aid the renewal of the pastor's ability to behold the beauty of the Lord.

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INTRODUCTION

In Marilynne Robinson's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *Gilead*, the Reverend John Ames, an aging and dying Presbyterian minister, "Believes," writes Greg Jones and Kevin Armstrong, "that God sees us in aesthetic terms and that we can see God in like terms if we cultivate the capacities to do so."[1] Ames has come to believe that beauty is at the heart of a right relationship with God, "Calvin says somewhere that each of us is an actor on a stage and God is the audience. That metaphor has always interested me, because it makes us artists of our behavior, and the reaction of God to us might be thought of as aesthetic rather than morally judgmental in the ordinary sense."[2] Experiencing the world aesthetically is not a sign of our otherness from God. Quite the contrary, it is rather essential to what it means to be made in God's image. Therefore, and critical to an understanding of pastoral identity, cultivating an aesthetic imagination is as much about beholding beauty as it is about becoming beautiful. The two, beholding and becoming, are inexorably linked.

Reverend Ames, late in the novel, reflects on an old Pentecost sermon he once gave. In it he remembers claiming that the Lord occasionally "breathes on this poor gray ember of Creation," causing it, only for a moment, to glow hot and bright. Ames, now wizened by years, revises his theology, "The Lord is more constant and far more extravagant than that seems to imply. Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like transfiguration. You don't have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see. Only, who could have the courage to see it?"[3]

Rev. Ames represents a paradox: As he ages his eyesight actually heightens. It becomes keener. The glory of the Lord is more obvious than it was to his younger self. Moreover, sensing God's glory is to become more fully human—to

[1] L. Gregory Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong, Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 8.
[2] Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004), 124.
[3] Robinson, *Gilead*, 245.

express the image of God. Robinson describes a kind of *theosis* that is happening to Rev. Ames as he gazes on the glory of the Lord. Ames is like so many pastors—caught up in the good and necessary work of parish ministry, unable to sustain a vision of the world shining with transfiguration.

The State of Ministry

Every newly ordained pastor—armed with little more than a bit of naiveté, a dash of idealism, and a long endured Master of Divinity degree—has that moment early on in ministry that grounds them back in the grace of God. Of course, these moments happen throughout one's ministry. For some it is the sense of inadequacy while giving a sixty second prayer and reading some Scripture at the bedside of a dying child. For others it is a parishioner's letter highlighting the pastor's shortcomings from the pulpit—the incorrect use of the English language, distracting mannerisms, or the lack of a common touch. In these moments pastors realize that they know far less than they need to, that the nature of the parish is vastly different than the academy, and that people in the pew are not so in awe of diplomas, stoles, robes, or titles as one might have thought.

I imagine pastors, down through the life of the Church, have always struggled with similar challenges: balancing a life of public service with family and personal needs and demands, the dreaded "back to Egypt" committees that lurk in every parish, and the rollercoaster of emotions from the warp and woof of everyday ministry—attending to the sick, celebrating the Eucharist, officiating weddings, and caring for the needs of the less fortunate. The Church, in her wisdom has adapted, giving pastors metaphors for ministry that sustain pastoral excellence through a lifetime of committed service to Christ and His Kingdom; metaphors like shepherd, physician, and ambassador that strengthen and often times recalibrate pastoral identity as a profession, a calling, and an office. These are images that have served pastors and their congregations well for the better part of two millennia.

More recently though these ancient metaphors for ministry have become to varying degrees strained, frayed, forgotten, and abandoned for more modern equivalents. Pastors continue to face age-old issues but now are added a new set of challenges, things such as the self's turn inward, an economics of scarcity, newly emerging and competing political ideals, and a move from transcendence to immanence. New metaphors for ministry—the therapist, the manager, the political activist, the celebrity, and others—are being offered and peddled by seminaries, judicatories, conferences, self-help books, and professional journals. Anxious pastors, eager and nostalgic for some form of cultural relevance, are all too readily snapping them up in exchange for their classical counterparts. And while something can be gleaned from all these modern images, they often fall short, on their own or in the ascendency, to inflame the pastor's heart with passion, desire, and love for God.

In many instances modern metaphors for ministry are assumed as a reaction to the currents of Western culture rather than a thoughtful and contextual response to the revelation of the Triune God. This means that the adoption of these images can be more about the survival of a certain vision of Christendom—its polity, hierarchy, cultic practices, and the church's place in the broader culture—rather than the sacrificial giving up of its life for love of God and neighbor. Put another way, modern metaphors for ministry fail pastors and the Church if they create a calling that is self-referential and self-serving before it is ever self-sacrificing.

As we will duly see, modern metaphors can and often do fail to focus pastors' attentions rightly, that they do not help pastors fix their gaze on that which is of utmost importance: the glory of God. As I will suggest, these images are not in and of themselves problematic. They can be especially helpful as pastors contextualize their strange and ancient calling. The church has always seen fit to add images where helpful. However, I will argue that a problem emerges when one or more of these images becomes dominant rather than held in tension with

or made subordinate to the controlling influences of other classical metaphors. To be clear, I am not critiquing the effectiveness of these images to accomplish their said ends. In fact, many of these metaphors are highly effective. That is part of the challenge for pastors. I am suggesting though, left alone, these metaphors are ineffective in arranging an encounter with the true, good, and beautiful God.

This project argues that pastoral identity can suffer, at the hands of modern metaphors for ministry, insofar as those metaphors fail to cultivate the pastor's ability to behold Beauty. To say this is to make the bold claim that the crisis facing pastoral identity is at its heart a crisis of aesthetics; by which I mean, the ability of pastors to apprehend, through the senses, the beauty of God and God's world revealed supremely in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This means that the crisis of pastoral identity is not primarily a problem of diminishing cultural relevancy, nor is it a crisis of strategy, nor is it even a deficiency of doctrine or ethics, but it is primarily a problem of aesthetics—of beholding the Beautiful.

At worst, many would say that pastoral identity is in crisis. At best, we could claim that pastoral identity is in flux. Whether in crisis or in flux, some significant shift is occurring within the American and mainline Protestant context.[4] The evidence, some of it anecdotal, is found in the proliferation and consumption of popular books, articles, conferences and journals. A recent survey, for instance, of the most read authors illuminates where pastors feel they are most deficient, where it is they need to grow to be successful in ministry.[5] The list demonstrates a preference for authors who write about ministry, spirituality, preaching, and church leadership. Noticeably absent are books on theology, biblical studies, Christian ethics, and church history. Of all the traditions, Catholic clergy are the

[4] Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wegner, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), xi. The *Pulpit and Pew Project* at Duke University Divinity School did not assume in its research that somehow pastoral ministry is more difficult today than the past. However, they did work off two assumptions: That conditions of ministry have changed in the last three or four decades, and that too many local church ministers leave.

[5] Jackson W. Carroll, "Pastors' Picks: What Preachers are Reading," *Christian Century* 120, no. 17 (2003):

most likely to read theologians. Protestant clergy, who are the focus of this project, are far more pragmatic in their reading.[6] If a cursory glance at the pastor's bookshelf is any indication, then it would appear Protestant clergy are less and less connected to the classics streams of Christian teaching and doctrine while becoming increasingly perplexed about their role in a pluralistic world.

As an aside, my goal here is not to make an exhaustive case for whether and why pastoral identity is truly in crisis. The aim is to give some reference points so that the larger concerns of this project—beauty, gift, and metaphor—can be located in their proper context. I am not attempting to establish the root cause or causes of the ongoing shift in pastoral identity. But I am suggesting that at the heart of this crisis are images of ministry that are both unhelpful and unhealthy. I do not intend to fully trace the pathological impact of the reigning metaphors for ministry. Instead, I want to suggest that there exist more fitting images, best taken as a constellation of metaphors, which better serve to form pastoral identity. Even so, it is beyond the limits of this project to demonstrate or measure the impact that these images would have on the imaginations of clergy and their congregations.

The pastor's uncertainty about what it means to be a minister is not to be mistaken as a mirage. The clatter from the parish has been loud enough to attract serious attention from scholars, judicatories, and organizations interested in the vitality of American Christianity. One notable player has been the Lilly Endowment. The Lilly Endowment has underwritten much, but certainly not all, of the efforts to understand, strengthen, and resource pastors and congregations. Since 2000, for instance, the Lilly Endowment's National Clergy Renewal Program alone has spent nearly twenty-nine million dollars enabling veteran pastors the opportunity to step away from parish life for rejuvenation and

[6] Jackson W. Carroll, *God's Potters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 109-110.

reflection.[7] Lilly supports nearly thirty affiliate organizations like Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, The Alban Institute, and many more in an effort to resource and map the current wellbeing of pastors and congregations. A joint effort with Duke Divinity produced the five-year interdenominational research project *Pulpit & Pew* aimed at capturing the most comprehensive picture of pastoral leadership in the United States.[8]

Several broad and significant factors over the last fifty to sixty years have contributed to the current flux in pastoral identity. From within the church the downsizing of denominations, the introduction of women in ordained ministry, the shortage of clergy, the rise of small rural and part-time calls, the trend towards second career and older pastors, and the often very public moral failings of clergy have all contributed to and are signs of a vocation in turmoil.[9] Other factors include the privatization of religious experience, an ever-increasing pluralism, declining birthrates among traditional Protestant populations, the rise of global non-Western dominated Christianity, and an increasing skepticism of institutions and institutional leaders.[10]

I am not saying that these changes are good or bad. I am simply illustrating the complexities of religious life in American Protestantism. Over a quarter of Americans have left the faith in which they were raised for either another religion or no religion. If we add to that population those who have switched from one Protestant tradition to another, then that figure goes up to forty-four percent.

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[7] The National Clergy Renewal Program annually awards as many as 120 grants of up to $45,000 to Christian congregations. These grants support sabbaticals for clergy. The following rationale is found on the Lilly Endowment website, "The job is demanding, and pastors perform their duties among a dizzying array of requests and expectations. Congregations are not always easy places, and the responsibilities can sometimes wear down the best pastors. It is not a job for the faint-hearted, but requires a balance of intelligence, love, humility, compassion and endurance. Most importantly, it demands that pastors remain in touch with the source of their life and strength. Like all people of faith, good pastors need moments to renew and refresh their energies and enthusiasm to determine again 'what makes their hearts sing.'"

[8] Pulpit & Pew is a now-completed research project. It was active from 2001 to 2005 and conducted a nationwide pastor survey, in-depth interviews and conferences and written reports and books. This study was the largest such survey ever conducted of pastoral leadership in North America. The research findings and articles can be accessed through www.pulpitandpew.org.

[9] Carroll, *God's Potters*, 14-15.

[10] Ibid., 15-16.

New data from the Pew Research Center shows that the U.S. is now a minority Protestant country, with current membership in Protestant churches hovering around forty-eight percent. Additionally, the largest growth area is with those who claim no religious affiliation at all. Nearly one-fifth of all American adults say they are not part of any traditional religious denomination. Clearly, the West is an increasingly complex place for the pastor to practice his or her calling and craft.[11] This is in part because the Church has not flown over much of this airfield since before Constantine and the Edict of Milan. We are now, in many respects, experiencing Christianity's cultural descent.

Given these changes pastors are left with more questions than answers about their roles and the place of their congregations in the broader society. With the decrease in membership numbers, many pastors have taken to attractional models of ministry: bigger and better buildings, more engaging and seeker friendship forms of worship, and more targeting programming. For mainline pastors the transition requires some difficult translation work that give rise to a series of difficult questions. For example, what use is there for churches that look like churches, have we reached the end of a certain way of speaking, what is the role of ritual, and what is the congregation's role in a sermon? These are just a few of the questions pastors face.

Hoge and Wenger, based on the *Pulpit and Pew* data, have identified four trends between the 1960s and today that have impacted the Protestant ministry.[12]

1. More Educated Laity – citing U. S. census data, there was nearly a 14 percent gain in four or more year college graduates among the entire

[11] For the most extensive and detailed data on the changing landscape of religious life in America, see the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, www.pewforum.org. Detailed data on global religious life is also available. Most pertinent to this discussion is the comprehensive U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, www.religions.pewforums.org. The most recent study dated 9 October 2012, *"Nones" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation*, see www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/ReligiousAfilliation/Unaffiliated/NonesOnTheRise-ful.pdf.
[12] Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 5-9.

American adult population from 1970 to 2000.[13] Hoge and Wenger point to further evidence of a more educated, more cosmopolitan laity with higher expectations of clergy regarding preaching, teaching, and leadership acumen.[14]

2. Less Trust in Centralized Authority – The eroding trust in American life is across the board, not just in religious institutions. In the 1960s 54 percent said that most people could be trusted. That number fell to 35 percent in the mid-1990s.[15] Specific to religious organizations, this decline in trust is especially pronounced in younger generations. 55 percent of Millennials say that churches and religious institutions have a positive impact on society. Five years ago that number was 73 percent.[16]
3. Decreased Denominational Commitment – Being Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, or Episcopalian means less today than it did even two decades ago. Robert Wuthnow identifies several factors for the denominational decline since the 1960s: "the ecumenical movement; attitudes of greater tolerance, fostered by a growing number of Americans with higher education; the displacement of denominational seminaries by university-based religious studies departments as the arena for teaching theology; and increasing intermarriage between adherents of different faiths."[17] Additionally, central denominational offices have been losing large numbers of members and congregations due to things like aging membership and irreconcilable theological disputes.[18]

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[13] Theodore Caplow, Louis Hick, and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The First Measured Century* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Press, 2001); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Educational Attainment: 2000* (Washington, D.C., 2003), available online at http://www.census.gov/2000pubs.

[14] Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 5.

[15] Richard Morin and Dan Balz, "Americans Losing Trust in Each Other and Institutions," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1996, pp. A1, A6.

[16] Hannah Fingerhut, "Millennials' views of news media, religious organizations grow more negative," *Pew Research Center*, January 4, 2016. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/04/millennials-views-of-news-media-religious-organizations-grow-more-negative/

[17] Robert Wuthnow, *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 15. Quoted in Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 7.

[18] The Presbyterian Church (USA), for example, had a Total membership at the end of 2014 of 1,667,767. That's compared to 1,760,200 at the end of 2013 and 1,849,496 at the end of 2012. The total number of churches in 2014 was 9,829, compared to 10,038 in 2013 and 10,262 in 2012. Significant of the 209-church loss of 2014 was the fact that only 101 of those were dismissed to other denominations, a decrease from the

4. Lower Clerical Authority – Esteem and authority for all professions have fallen. Relative to other professions clergy decline has been smaller, but nevertheless significant, when compared to other professions.[19]

So how are pastors really faring? Are pastors facing a crisis of identity? Is pastoral ministry following a narrative of decline? Since the early eighteenth century clergy have been lamenting the decline of their influence in society. In some real sense this has proved true. However, clergy in America still lead congregations, both Protestant and Catholic, which represent and include sixty percent of the population.[20] As the now concluded *Pulpit & Pew* research and survey project has demonstrated, the question of decline in certain senses proves difficult to answer definitively. There are specific signs of life and vitality. However, there are more general signs for concern. The truth is likely somewhere between an alarmist's "sky is falling" and a naïve "all is well." It probably goes without saying, but much of the research on the state of pastoral ministry, including *Pulpit & Pew*, is not so much theological reflection as it is taking the temperature, so to speak, of pastors currently serving in a parish. It is possible, if not probable, therefore, that the same question regarding the state of parish ministry could receive different answers depending one's approach.

As Protestant pastors look out from the pulpit on Sunday morning they more than likely see an aging and empty sanctuary. For instance, the typical Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sanctuary has space for two times the average number in worship in growing churches and more than three times the number of worshipers in other churches.[21] According to the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (2008/9), the average age of an American worshiper is 54 years. This is

148 congregations dismissed to other denominations in 2013. Statistical data for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be found at the Office of the General Assembly, http://oga.pcusa.org/section/churchwide-ministries/stats/.

[19] Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition*, 8.

[20] Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 1.

[21] Deborah Bruce, Katie Duncan, Joelle Kopacz and Cynthia Woolever, *The U.S. Congregational Life Survey: Fastest Growing Presbyterian Churches* (Louisville: Research Services Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2012), https://www.pcusa.org/resource/us-congregational-life-survey-fastest-growing-pres/.

10 years older than the average age of the country's over-15 population.[22] By any measure of institutional vitality—whether that be in business, not for profits, governments, educational institution, or volunteer associations—mainline Protestantism in American would be considered in a situation of crisis management. I recognize, from first hand experience, that the Church is not easily equated with any of the aforementioned organizations. It is its own unique thing—the real and ongoing presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Nevertheless, it is often the case that mainline judicatories hide from this stark reality, using the church's distinctiveness as an excuse to deny or explain away the real challenges facing parish and pastors today. A common phrase in mainline pastoral ministry has to do with pastors assisting parishes in "a good death."[23] I do not discredit this kind of ministry, but a Christian good death seems to rely heavily on the notion of resurrection. A good death, in Christian terms, is not terminal, as seems to be implied in much of mainline ministry today.

If physical health is any indication, then the vast majority of pastors are most certainly in crisis. According to standards set by the National Institutes of Health, seventy-eight percent of pastors are either overweight or obese.[24] A recent study of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina found 64 percent of clergywomen and 80 percent of clergymen qualify as overweight or obese.[25] This may be a symptom of a pastor in crisis or a contributing factor. One would have to be a docetist to believe that physical health played no part in the overall spiritual vitality and health of clergy.

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[22] Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who's Going Where and Why*, 2nd edition (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010), 13.
[23] Of course, the reference is always about local congregations. Nevertheless, the sentiment has bearings on denominations as a whole.
[24] Ibid., 125. 48 percent of pastors are overweight and 30 percent are obese.
[25] *Summary Report: 2014 Statewide Survey of United Methodist Clergy in North Carolina,* (Durham, NC: Duke Clergy Health Initiative, 2014) 18. Supported by The Duke Endowment, The Divinity School at Duke University, The North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences of the United Methodist Church.

Clergy mental health is also of great consideration. Paradoxically, though clergy are surrounded by people, 10-17 percent "report high levels of social isolation."[26] 20 percent feel "moderately socially isolated."[27] Clergy feel called by God which gives them a strong sense of purposefulness in their work.[28] Yet the nature and combination of tasks often lead to high levels of stress.[29] This could suggest that pastors somehow feel God's call upon their lives is to establish the kingdom rather than bear witness to its arrival. There is a sense in which God has played his part, now you pastors go and play yours. If this is the case, then it is no wonder pastors feel isolated and stressed.

Despite pastors' work week dramatically declining—75.7 hours per week in 1934, 66.7 hours in 1954, and 50.8 hours in 2001—the number of roles and responsibilities pastors are expected to master have rapidly increased.[30] The impression is that pastors are attempting to do far more work within fewer hours. As the number of hours worked decline so to does the compensation of clergy relative to other professionals.[31] A recent study in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion has given us some new insights on clergy compensation.[32] On some level the news is good: The wage gap that separates clergy from other college-educated professionals is declining.[33] However, these gains have come

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[26] Proeschold-Bell, R. J., Eisenberg, A., Adams, C., Smith, B., Legrand, S. and Wilk, A. (2015), "The Glory of God is a Human Being Fully Alive: Predictors of Positive Versus Negative Mental Health Among Clergy." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54: 717. doi:10.1111/jssr.12234

[27] Ibid., 717.

[28] Dennis M. Campbell, *Who Will Go for Us? An Invitation to Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 26-59.

[29] The typical pastor works in six categories: preaching, ritualist (weddings, baptisms, funerals, etc.), pastoral care, teacher, organizers (denominational and community work), and administrator. Samuel W. Blizzard, "The minister's dilemma," *Christian Century* 73 (17): 508-510. The Proeschold-Bell and Eisenberg study attempts to differentiate between clergy mental illness and mental health. There is more hard data on clergy mental illness and less on mental health.

[30] Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations*, 101-106.

[31] Becky R. McMillan and Matthew J. Price, *How Much Should We Pay The Pastor: A Fresh Look at Clergy Salaries in the 21st Century* (Durham, NC: Pulpit & Pew, 2003), 12-13. Median salaries for all clergy have increased in the second half of the 20th Century. However, clergy salaries are now more in line with teachers and social workers than with doctors and lawyers.

[32] Schleifer, C. and Chaves, M. (2016), The Price of the Calling: Exploring Clergy Compensation Using Current Population Survey Data. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 55: 130–152. doi: 10.1111/jssr.12254

[33] Ibid., Inflation-adjusted wages, non-Catholic clergy made $4.37 more/hour than in 1983.

to clergy serving larger and more urban parishes. Though clergy compensation is gaining against other professions, the 35 highest-income professions in the United States, such as doctors, lawyers, investment bankers, and engineers, are "running away from everyone else."[34] Also, clergy in non-church settings—chaplains, teachers, and administrators—make 19 percent more than peers working in the parish.[35] Women clergy, in Protestant mainline denominations, who are solo or senior pastors have no statistically significant difference in compensation from men.[36] However, while women get equal pay for equal work *among peers*, "they do not seem to have equal access to the higher-paying jobs."[37]

Some of this information, and also what follows, suggest that parish ministry is becoming less attractive, specifically to young adults. It is also worth considering that ministry is becoming less attractive to parents of young adult children. Parents may be far less eager to have a 'pastor' in the family as they once where. Without family support and/or enthusiasm, this could make the path in to ministry that much more lonely.

Another significant piece of the financial puzzle has to do with student debt. In 2013 the Lilly Endowment partnered with the Association of Theological Schools to fund and coordinate the Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers (ECFFM) Initiative.[38] The ECFFM expanded to 51 schools with the goal of providing education and research regarding student debt and financial literacy.

[34] Ibid., 143-144, 148-9. Clergy, like everyone else, are losing ground to the top 7 percent of occupations.
[35] Ibid., 146.
[36] McMillan and Price, "How Much Should We Pay the Pator," 14. The study shows that "restricting attention only to those mainline pastors earning less than $60,000 (85 percent of pastors), and holding constant education, experience, size of congregation, and average income level of laity, we found only a $600 (not statistically significant) difference between average male and female clergy salaries."
[37] Ibid., 14.
[38] http://www.ats.edu/resources/current-initiatives/economic-challenges-facing-future-ministers

In 2001, 20 percent of Master of Divinity graduates had $30,000 or more debt. This percent increased to 35 percent in 2011.[39]

One obvious factor affecting clergypersons ability to service their debt has to do with the availability of parish openings. A popular and misleading impression has been the notion of a clergy shortage. While true for North American Catholicism, this is not the case for American Protestantism.[40] The challenge for American denominations is not having too many or too few clergy, but one of balance between the supply and demand of qualified candidates and sustainable parishes.[41] A declining number of clergy are able to make a full-time living in parish ministry. The numbers of churches that can afford to hire a fully called and installed pastor are shrinking.[42] This requires recent seminarians to square their sense of call from God with the short supply of empty pulpits. Did I not hear God correctly, have I not been faithful to prepare myself well for the parish, or has my home church and judicatory lied to me about my giftedness for ministry? These are just a few of the questions a young pastor might be asking.

In a 2001 survey conducted by the evangelical magazine *Leadership* ninety-one percent of the clergy said they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with ministry, and seventy-one percent "definitely" want to stay in ministry.[43] It is clear that a high percentage of pastors experience a strong sense of God's call and derive a great amount of meaning from parish work. And the early findings of the *Pulpit & Pew* survey surprised many with news of clergy's high responses of job

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[39] Sharon L. Miller, Kim Maphis Early and Anthony T. Ruger, "A Call to Action: Lifting the Burden, How Theological Schools Can Help Students Manage Educational Debt" (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary, April 2014).
[40] For liberal and conservative denominations there are nearly two ordained clergy for every one congregation. See Patricia M. Y. Chang, "Assessing the Clergy Supply in the 21st Century" (Durham, NC: Pulpit & Pew, 2004), 8.
[41] J. Marcum, "Parsing the Pastor Shortage," Presbyterian Church USA Research Services, 2001.
[42] The number of congregations with less than 100 in weekend worship attendance has moved from 46.6 percent in 2005 to 57.9 percent in 2015. David A. Roozen, *American Congregations 2015: Thriving and Surviving*, Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2. http://FaithCommunitiesToday.org.
[43] Carroll, *God's Potters*, 161.

satisfaction.[44] Given all the negative factors – loneliness, seminary debt, fewer full-time pulpits, etc.—many pastors in the parish remain committed to staying the course with some sense of joy in the journey. Does this mean that all is well in the North American Protestant parish? Could it mean that we have been overreacting, sounding unnecessary alarms? Possibly, but the full story is a bit more complex, in part, because it is difficult to measure the unheard voices. There are those who could not find a job in the parish, or those who could not afford to take a call, or those who left parish ministry for all the reasons mentioned above.[45] The pastor who remains or even enters parish ministry in the first place seems to be the exception and not the rule. Seminary enrollment has dropped 24 percent in the last decade. As a result, some seminaries have closed their doors or merged with other theological institutions or university graduate programs.[46] The lost viability of many seminaries, the disappearance of young seminaries and clergy, and the diminishing opportunities in the parish post-seminary all help fill in the full picture of the state of parish ministry in the 21st century.[47]

Faithful Presence

By nearly any measure—whether it is denominational balance sheets propped up by endowments, precipitous decline in membership, or laity who are under-catechized and unequipped to engage the gospel in a pluralistic world—the

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[44] L. Gregory Jones, "Take This Job," *Christian Century*, 119, no. 17 (2002).
[45] Wheeler, David R. "Higher Calling, Lower Wages: The Vanishing of the Middle-Class Clergy." *The Atlantic*, July 22, 2014, Business. http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/07/higher-calling-lower-wages-the-collapse-of-the-middle-class-clergy/374786/.
[46] Andover-Newton, America's oldest graduate school of theology, announced in November 2015 that it would sell its campus, cease granting degrees, and merge some of its resources and faculty with Yale Divinity School. The Episcopal Divinity School of Boston has made a similar decision. See Elesha Coffman, "Are We Entering the End Times for Mainline Seminaries?" *Religion Dispatches*, August 30, 2016, http://religiondispatches.org/are-we-entering-the-end-times-for-mainline-seminaries/. Oddly enough, in 2012 the Association of Theological schools approved the opening of 13 new theological schools. At the same time, enrollment across all ATS schools continued to fall.
[47] For an excellent and comprehensive summary of the state of theological education see Barbara G. Wheeler and Anthony T. Ruger, "Sobering figures point to overall enrollment decline," Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, http://www.intrust.org/Portals/39/docs/IT413wheeler.pdf?ver=2013-04-30-121208-187.

church is struggling to understand what it means to be the church.[48] Even where pastors express high levels of satisfaction, it is important to remember that a crisis does not have to be "felt" to be a crisis. [49] As Mark Chaves contends it is difficult to measure clergy health because there is no ongoing and comprehensive survey of American clergy.[50] Nevertheless, his conclusion is direct, doubtful of being reversed, and yet reticent to sound an immediate alarm:

> "Overall, it would be difficult to look at these trends and conclude that the last several decades have been good ones for religious leaders. The underlying trends are slow…So I would not say that religious leadership faces a time of acute crisis. I would say, however, that the broad picture portrays a professional group that has lost ground in recent decades when it comes to its reputation, social prominence, and attractiveness as a career choice for young people. These trends are long-term, and it is difficult to see how they might be reversed."

Given what Chaves has to say on the whole, his conclusion that pastoral ministry is not in a state of acute crisis seems to be a bit conciliatory. All the same, whether the crisis is acute or brewing, Chaves seems to acknowledge the inevitability of an impending breaking point.

It seems, by multiple accounts that we are at a clarifying moment in what has counted for faithful pastoral formation and what metaphors have been used to shape pastoral imagination. Given what I have written above, it would be easy to conclude that I am pessimistic about the prospects of pastoral ministry. Nothing could be further from the truth or further from the aim of this project as a whole. To claim that pastoral ministry is in crisis is not to claim that the church is ill positioned for faithful witness. Scripture often reveals the heart and will of the Triune God most fully in just such times of crisis. Flood, exodus, wilderness wandering, exile, and cross all seem to be occasions for God to constitute a

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[48] Mark Chaves writes, "The decline of liberal Protestant denominations is one of the best known religious trends of the last several decades, but it often is misunderstood." *American Religion: Contemporary Trends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 81.

[49] This is a substantial claim that merits more sustained attention. It is worth noting that most of the analysis done on existing data is often closely linked with judicatories who are hopeful of certain interpretations. Personally, I have been surprised by how misguided the conclusions of my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), have been over the last 10-15 years given the availability of data from their own statistical offices, let allow data from external sources.

[50] Chaves, *American Religion*, 69.

people who belong to him. This has been true in much of church history and I believe is true for the church today. These are all occasions for the people of God to hear and see God more clearly. Here, Walter Brueggemann strikes a helpful, realistic, yet hopeful tone:

> "Everyone now agrees that we are at a new season in the life of the U.S. church, a new season that is starkly different from what was but that has almost taken us by surprise. That new season of dislocation is surely to be seen as a profound challenge to the church. It is, moreover, widely felt, not without reason to be a serious threat. It may also turn out to be a marvelous invitation for newness together that moves past old postures that predictably, perhaps inevitably, produced quarrels. The massive and unarguable dislocation of the conventional institutional church may be an occasion for a common resubmission to the power of God's Spirit."[51]

So how exactly is the current crisis clarifying, even helpful in furthering the purposes of Jesus Christ? For starters, the nature of the current dislocation helpfully exposes three common postures mainline Protestantism has taken towards the broader culture. By 'posture' I mean the ways in which the church positions itself—this implies an aesthetic engagement of the body—that then informs how we view God's involvement in his creation and by extension the church's place in that creation. These three postures would be fortification, domination, or accommodation. *Fortification* is about the church separating itself from the broader culture. Here there is a deep suspicion of all things not explicitly Christian. And so the church removes itself from the public square.[52] *Domination* has to do with the church called to conquer or subdue this evil age. This is the church ready to do battle in the name of Jesus.[53] *Accommodation* has to do with the church either harmonizing religious beliefs with the values of the wider culture or allowing religious convictions to be privatized, making them one piece of a larger vision of human flourishing.[54] All three separate the world into

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[51] Walter Brueggemann, *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000) 29.
[52] It is towards this idea of fortification within American evangelicalism that Mark Noll wrote *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Less so today, but historically there has been significant overlap between mainline Protestantism and American evangelicalism.
[53] Jerry Falwell and the rise of the Moral Majority come to mind.
[54] This accusation would be leveled at much of the Protestant Mainline.

sacred and secular. My point: All three have a limited view of God's glory, and consequently his sovereignty.[55]

Naturally then, all three of these postures—fortification, domination, and accommodation—have played a significant role in shaping pastoral imagination. Whether they call the church to go into hiding, to do battle against an evil empire, or to mingle seamlessly with their surroundings, all three postures call upon metaphors that serve to form pastoral identity. The ongoing decline, some would argue crisis, in mainline Protestantism is an opportunity for pastors to recognize their imaginative captivity to modern metaphors. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to assume metaphors for ministry that enable the pastor to behold the beauty of a fully sovereign God. And it is this vision of God's glory that creates the conditions for a new posture towards God's world to emerge, what James Davison Hunter in *To Change the World calls* "faithful presence."[56] This fourth posture—based on the alien in exile—draws on Jeremiah 29:4-7, "…but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile…."[57] It is a vision of God's glory that enables the exile to rest *in* and bear witness *to* the sovereignty of God. Faithful presence implies attentiveness—in aesthetic terms—to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that enables the faithful inhabiting of the alien land we presently call home.

Pastors are clearly entering a strange new land. Christianity is increasingly one among many in the marketplace of religions and ideologies.[58] The old

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[55] Fortification implies that God's power is insufficient. Domination implies that God's power has been limited to certain spheres and can be advanced only with our aid. Accommodation implies that God's power and will are in some sense influenced by creation. All these are due to an insufficient vision of God's glory.

[56] James Davison Hunter, To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 243-248. Hunter gives his own labels to the postures mentioned above: Fortification is "purity from," domination is "defensive against," and accommodation is "relevance to" (276).

[57] Ibid., 276-277.

[58] Secularism, according to Charles Taylor, is not the decrease of religious belief as such, but the proliferation of other options: "A move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the

secularization theories are giving way to a flourishing of religious diversity. Christianity is rapidly losing its place of privilege, which, as many have argued, is not an entirely adverse development.[59] Some unfortunate consequences though, would be that Christianity is being exiled to the confines of the home and heart, that it has to fight to maintain or gain ground, or that it is succumbing to the age-old problem of syncretism. This has led pastors to images that otherwise validate their usefulness in a world that has a growing suspicion of what they might be good for. In this way metaphors become an apologetic for ministry rather than sharpening the pastor's senses to behold the beauty of God.

Conclusion: Beauty, Gift, and Metaphor

As stated, this project suggest that pastoral identity suffers, at the hands of modern metaphors for ministry, because those metaphors fail to cultivate the pastor's ability to behold the beauty of God. And the pastor who no longer beholds beauty fails to receive ministry as grace, as gift. The three key words in this statement are *beauty*, *gift*, and *metaphor*. These are the terms to which this project seeks definition. What follows then is an exploration between these three themes as they relate to forming both current and potential understandings of what defines pastoral excellence and faithfulness. The goal is to understand the past and present state of pastoral identity so as to present the possibility of reimagining a modern minister who is striving to be supremely attentive to the beauty of God. Beginning in part one, we take the first of our three themes, *beauty*, and set beauty in its larger historical context—what role it has played more generally throughout Western thought—while giving special attention to the modern disappearance of beauty. We will look at how the parish, following the world's logic, has come to be largely without beauty. We ask the question why a world and a parish without beauty matter in the first place, specifically, what is at

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easiest to embrace" is the condition that establishes belief in modernity or post-modernity. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), 3.

[59] This is the sentiment of Hauerwas and Willimon dating back to their now classic book *Resident Aliens*, "The loss of Christendom gives us a *joyous* opportunity to reclaim the freedom to proclaim the gospel in a way in which we cannot when the main social task of the church is to serve as one among many helpful props of the state" (emphasis added). Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 38-39.

stake for pastoral excellence in a world and parish no longer attentive or able to apprehend beauty.

Part two turns to the second theme of *gift*. Grasping ministry as a 'charism,' as gift, is the condition by which pastors form the capacity to behold the glory of the Lord. The historic three-fold understanding of pastoral identity as *calling*, *office*, and *profession*—metaphors themselves—have given rise to and support biblical and extra-biblical metaphors for ministry that ground pastoral identity in grace, in gift, so as to enable pastors to behold, to rightly see and hear, the beauty of the revealed beauty of God.

Finally, our third theme is taken up, that of *metaphor*. This section explores how the reigning metaphors for ministry have destabilized the classic threefold understanding of pastoral identity, rendering ministry a joyless, if even essential, drudgery. These images fail to support or give rise to an understanding of ministry fundamentally as gift, blinding pastors to the possibility of gazing upon the glory of God. As suggested, it is largely due to modern metaphors that pastors have lost the ability to apprehend the beauty of God, which is the source and sole content of their calling. The final and concluding chapter offers up a way forward, proposing a new metaphor for ministry, that when used in a constellation of metaphors for ministry, both ancient and contemporary, offers a way to recover the pastor's ability to see and hear rightly.

As Thomas Aquinas argues in his treatise on happiness in the *prima secundae* of the *Summa Theologia*, ultimate joy is the result of the human person apprehending the last end. Joy, therefore, is the consequence of the human person fully beholding the Beatific Vision. Bodily resurrection, as making possible communion with God, is the *telos* of redeemed humanity. Metaphors for ministry that do not cultivate the pastor's ability to contemplate, to see, the glory of the Lord are metaphors that deny pastors joy—the joy of an intimate and life

giving friendship with Jesus Christ that nourishes and unites them by the Spirit with God the Father.

In one sense then, the temperature, so to speak, of any pastoral crisis can be explained by the presence or absence of joy. Therefore, at one level, this study on pastoral identity is a conversation deeply related to the presence of a distinctly Christian understanding of joy. Only metaphors that direct one's gaze back towards the source of all beauty are capable of sustaining a joy-filled life and ministry.

Following the events of Good Friday, the disciples frightened and nervous in a bolted room do not inspire a laudable vision of joyful pastoral ministry. But again, this disheveled scene of human weakness, doubt, and panic becomes God's suitable occasion for divine revelation. Clearing away the bloodied and frenzied activities of Jerusalem and Golgotha, struggling with the ability to process the weekend's events, and admitting their utter helplessness all leaves the disciples open to see and receive God's good news in the flesh. The upper room is the peculiar occasion and place for disciples to see the Risen Lord, who is Jesus, joy of the highest heaven. Hearing and seeing the beauty of the Incarnate Word, this is potentially the great and unexpected blessing of finding oneself bolted in a room. These are the places where pastors finally and fully recognize that their imaginations are captive to certain metaphors and are in need of conversion. I acknowledge that modern metaphors for ministry are successful in many ways valued by the broader culture, but they more often than not fail on the most important grounds, which is to train eyes and ears to behold the Beauty of God: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" (Psalm 27:4).[60]

[60] The psalmist is placing his trust in YHWH in the face of some adversity or threat. The psalmist's appeal is to gain entrance to Mount Zion, city of the living God. In this context, the beholding of God's beauty is more than pleasing the eye; rather, it is wrapped up in the longed for salvation of the one who is in distress. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalm 1-59*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 334.

BEAUTY

I. A World and Parish Without Beauty

Our first word is beauty. Beauty has a long history of being essential to meaning making. At the dawning of the modern era beauty's place of privilege began to wane. In the introduction I left off with the assertion that modern metaphors for ministry fail because they are unable to fully and faithfully form pastors to behold the beauty of God. In a world that privatizes, commodifies, defaces and/or ignores beauty, this claim could seem banal and anachronistic. However, it is not mere happenstance that the destabilization of pastoral identity has coincided with the disenchantment of the Western world.[61] For the better part of the church's history it would have been inconceivable to think that a pastor could exercise his calling in a world without beauty, for, that would be the same as claiming a world without God. And yet, this is exactly the situation pastors currently face.

In this chapter we will first explore how a significant part of the theological tradition has placed beauty at the center of our knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God, so that the lack of any aesthetic sensibility or experience is likely damaging to faith and practice. Second, I will give a broad overview of the loss of beauty as a central aspect of our ways of experiencing the modern world. Third, I will trace the connection between the loss of beauty and the church generally in Christian sensibility and more specifically as this relates to the Protestant Reformation and its suspicions of images. Fourth and finally, we will follow up with a brief section pointing to the state of things currently in the church with regards to beauty and the possible, yet gradual, recovery of the importance of beauty for faith and for the theology that grows out of it.

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[61] I realize that the long held belief of secularization theory—that religious belief would decline as modernity took hold—has been challenged in the last several decades. Yes, something called "disenchantment" has been occurring, but it is not as simple as that. According to Charles Taylor, despite the rise of exclusive humanism—"I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing" (p. 18)—the world has remained haunted by the transcendent. Charles Taylor, *Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007) 13-16. Sociologist Peter Berger has also contributed widely to the redefinition of secularization theory within a specifically religious context. His reevaluation began in 1967 with *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* and followed up with numerous books, his latest being *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralistic Age* (2014).

Beauty's Essential Role in the Story of the Church

The Industrial Revolution, European Colonialism, the First World War and the start of the Second World War led the French philosopher and Christian mystic, Simone Weil, to write, "Today one might think that the white races had almost lost all feeling for the beauty of the world, and that they had taken upon themselves the tasks of making it disappear from all the continents where they have penetrated with their armies, their trade, and their religion."[62] Understandably, beauty has fallen on considerably hard times. Modernity has made beauty a matter of great dispute. The academy has nearly forgotten beauty's power while Madison Avenue has seized upon it. The upshot is that beauty is often viewed as inconsequential to a right understanding of human flourishing or it is simply a tool to manipulate and shape the right kind of consumer. In both, beauty has lost its place of privilege in helping to make meaning, in shaping ultimate reality, and in drawing the world to what is good and true.

We live today in a world without beauty, but it was not always so. Since antiquity beauty has been counted, along with goodness and truth, as one of the ultimate or divine realities or values.[63] These are what the tradition has labeled *transcendentals*, which "means, simply, *universal*, in the sense of that which is not confined by but goes beyond (*transcends*) all particular categories."[64] This is another way of claiming that truth, goodness, and beauty are objective realities that give definition to all that is seen and unseen. Stephen John Wright observes, "Beauty as a transcendental means that beauty is identical with being

[62] Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: Putman, 1951), 162.
[63] It was Pseudo-Dionysius in the late 5th to early 6th century that claimed Beauty to be the same as the Good. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names, in Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works,* trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist, 1988) 76. See also, Sartwell, Crispin, "Beauty", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/beauty/>.
[64] Aidan Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2011), 1.

itself."[65] Beauty is greater than its properties and thus defies categorization. Again, Wright comments, "The span of the transcendentals causes them to be continuous with being itself, and their limitless reach creates difficulties for their conceptualization."[66] Wright then turns to Balthasar for clarification, "These qualities are not unknown to us, because they are present—even though in varying degrees and appearances—in all that exists; but they cannot be expressed by limited 'definitions' because 'being,' as such, transcends all specific 'definitions.'"[67] For those of us now living in and captive to an immanent frame—to use a phrase coined by Charles Taylor—it is not only that we can no longer conceive of the transcendentals, but we neither believe them to be possible or if possible, then not worthy of consideration.[68]

Plato claimed that real beauty is not located in the material but the non-material world. It is this non-material world of Forms or Ideas that possess the highest reality. As the neo-Platonist Plotinus suggests, beauty is where "the Ideal-Form has entered, it has grouped and coordinated what from a diversity of parts was to become a unity: it has rallied confusion into co-operation: it has made the sum one harmonious coherence: for the Idea is a unity and what it moulds must come into unity as far as multiplicity may."[69] Ugliness, on the other hand, is the material world's nonconformity or rebellion against higher non-material Forms or Ideas, "And this is the Absolute Ugly: an ugly thing is something that has not

[65] Stephen John Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics: A Theology of Beauty in Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 45.
[66] Ibid., 42.
[67] Ibid., 42. See also, Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Earthly Beauty and Divine Glory," *Communio* 10:3 (1983), 202.
[68] This last point is made by Taylor as he references Francis Bacon, "Bacon insists that the goal of science is not to discover a noble over-all pattern in things (as he somewhat tendentiously describes the sciences of Aristotle), which we can take pride in making evident, but the making of experiments which permit us to 'improve the condition of mankind.'" Taylor, *Secular Age*, 543. For Taylor's broader discussion on his concept of immanent frame see pages 542-557. In this sense, beauty, as well as the other transcendentals, are useful in so far as they are a utility for the modern project of human progress.
[69] Plotinus, text, P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzer (ed. Minor), 3 vols. (Oxford, 1966, 1977, 1988); 22 *Ennead* I, 6.

been entirely mastered by pattern, that is by Reason, the Matter not yielding at all points and in all respects to Ideal-Form."[70]

As is well known, the Platonic tradition has had a healthy suspicion of the material world. Most famously, we see this in Plato's wariness with art, especially poetry. However, it is a bit more complex than saying Plato was against all forms of poetry. Not one to mince words, R. G. Collingwood, makes a case in his classic text, *The Principles of Art* (1938), that the "Platonic 'attack on art' is a myth whose vitality throws a lurid light on the scholarship of those who have invented and perpetuated it."[71] Collingwood argues that Plato drew a distinction between two different forms of poetry. One form is 'representative' and the other is not.[72] By 'representative,' Plato means poetry that is amusing. Therefore, Plato's attack on poetry is not an attack on art per se, but rather on amusement. Collingwood writes, "Plato saw that amusement art arouses emotions which it does not direct to any outlet in practical life; and wrongly inferred that its excessive development would breed a society overcharged with purposeless emotions." Sounding prescient, Collingwood describes the realization of Plato's concern:

> The dangers to civilization foreseen by Plato's prophetic thought were a long time maturing. Greco-Roman society was vigorous enough to go on paying the interest on the accumulating debt out of the energies of its everyday life for six or seven centuries. But from Plato onwards its life was a rearguard action against emotional bankruptcy. The critical moment was reached when Rome created an urban proletariat whose only function was to eat free bread and watch free shows…When that had been done, it was only a question of time until Plato's nightmare of a consumer's society came true: the drones set up their own king, and the story of the hive came to an end."[73]

Plato's underlying critique is that a certain kind of poet fails to adequately represent the true nature of the things about which they write. For Plato, this is far from harmless; he claims that poems "maim the thought of those who hear

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[70] Plotinus, 22 *Ennead* I, 6.
[71] R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 46.
[72] Ibid., 46.
[73] Ibid., 98-99. A popular reinterpretation of Plato's concern comes in Neil Postman's late 20th century bestseller, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 6.

them."[74] Plato argues that there are Forms, things like chairs, tables and beds, things made by an ultimate being, a god. In the material world there are imitations (Gr *mimeses*) of these Forms made by carpenters, builders, etc. Lastly, there are those, like poets, who create images of material objects. In other words, the artist, for Plato, is an imitator of imitations.[75] Plato concludes that poets therefore are "at the third generation from nature" or "third from a king and the truth."[76] Poets offer counterfeits of real Forms. The poet's *mimesis* is harmful to the viewer because "it originates in appearance rather than in reality, so that judged on its own terms the product of imitation has an ignoble pedigree (*Republic* 603b). The imitative arts positively direct a soul toward appearances, away from proper objects of inquiry…an imitation keeps your eyes on the copy alone."[77] The arts prove seductive, holding the soul captive to shadows of the real world of Forms and Ideas.[78] Where the poet enslaves the soul to cheap and sentimental imitations of Forms, the philosopher liberates the rational soul from the hazy and dull material world.

For our purposes, Plato is important because, and as already mentioned, he establishes beauty as a transcendental, or as an objective reality of the highest order. Beauty is more than a matter of taste. In fact, tastes are something to be distrusted. Therefore, knowing and experiencing beauty is an exercise of both the senses and the mind. Secondly, Plato establishes an ethics of aesthetics.[79]

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[74] Plato, *Republic*, Book X.
[75] Plato, *Republic*, Book X.
[76] Plato, *Republic*, Book X, 597e3-4, 6-7. Griswold, Charles L., "Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/plato-rhetoric/>.
[77] Pappas, Nickolas, "Plato's Aesthetics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/plato-aesthetics/, 35.
[78] According to Collingwood, beauty is linked to desire, "The theory of beauty is thus, in Plato, connected not with the theory of poetry or any other art, but primarily with the theory of sexual love, secondly with the theory of morals…." Collingwood, *The Principals of Art*, 38.
[79] As Iris Murdoch argues, "From the start the need for the Forms in Plato's mind is a moral need. The theory expresses a certainty that goodness is something indubitably real, unitary, and (somehow) simple, not fully expressed in the sensible world, therefore living elsewhere." *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 25.

Beauty, says Plato, produces pleasure in the beholder.[80] This pleasure then shapes the beholder's ethic—her way in the world, her values, how she relates to others, and her behavior. This is exactly why Plato remains so cautious about the arts. Iris Murdoch sums up Plato's objection to art:

> "Art is dangerous chiefly because it apes the spiritual and subtly disguises and trivializes it. Artists play irresponsibly with religious imagery which, if it must exist, should be critically controlled by the internal, or external, authority of reason. Artists obscure the enlightening power of thought and skill by aiming at plausibility rather than truth. Art delights in unsavory trivia and in the endless proliferation of senseless images. Art is playful in a sinister sense, full of a spiteful amused acceptance of evil, and through buffoonery and mockery weakens moral discrimination. The artist cannot represent or celebrate the good, but only what is daimonic and fantastic and extreme; whereas truth is quiet and sober and confined. Art is sophistry, at best an ironic mimesis whose fake 'truthfulness' is subtle enemy of virtue. Indirectness and irony prevent the immediate relationship with truth which occurs in live discourse; art is thus the enemy of the dialectic."[81]

For Plato, art distances us from reality—the world of Forms—by encouraging us "to believe in the omnipotence of thought."[82] Plato worries that people would be taken captive by counterfeit beauty and have their ability to rightly make their way through the world impaired, ultimately threatening Plato's ideal *polis*. Aesthetic judgments, for Plato, are deeply moral. Moreover, Plato realizes a deficient aesthetic imagination damages not just individuals but society as a whole. Plato believes that his whole project—his politic—can be undone by poor aesthetics. Up until the eighteenth century, the Platonic insistence of beauty as a transcendental would win the day. However, and equally important, Plato's distrust of the material world, modified in the hands of later thinkers, would become one of the deadliest blows to beauty.[83]

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[80] According to Murdoch, "Plato's fear of art…is to some extent a fear of pleasure." *The Fire and the Sun*, 16.
[81] Ibid., 66.
[82] Ibid., 42.
[83] Ibid., 17-18. Murdoch highlights the turn Kant takes from Plato, "Plato wants to cut art off from beauty, because he regards beauty as too serious a matter to be commandeered by art…Kant, on the other hand, wants to cut beauty off from morals. Kant restricts beauty for the same reason for which Plato restricts art, to get it cleanly out of the way of something more important."

It is difficult to find a Church Father who does not, at least in some peripheral way, address beauty.[84] As early as the second century, Irenaeus, opposing the Platonic tradition, begins by asserting the goodness and beauty of the material and created world, "God formed all things in the world, by means of the Word and the Holy Spirit: and that although He is to us in this life invisible and incomprehensible, nevertheless He is not unknown; inasmuch as His works do declare Him, and His Word has shown that in many modes He may be seen and known."[85] As Eric Osborne writes, "Two themes dominate the aesthetic of Irenaeus: manifestation and vision. They contrast with Gnosticism, where all is concealed and secret. This concealment demands disclosure to be followed by exposition."[86] In contrast to the Gnostics, Irenaeus is "visually oriented."[87] The revelation or manifestation of God "enables participation in divine beauty."[88] And the vision of God's glory or beauty "brings participation in life."[89] For Irenaeus, the manifestation of divine beauty gives way to a vision of divine beauty, which in turn gives way to participation in the life of God.[90]

Unlike many later theologians, Irenaeus is willing to hold two things in tension without needing to penetrate the mystery too deeply—the unknowability of God and the kerygmatic nature of His creation. The former points to the unparalleled beauty of God while the latter indicates the beauty of God's handiwork. God *is* ultimate beauty therefore God's creation, as a work of his hand, must be

[84] Balthasar argues that the Church Fathers and the high Scholastics believed beauty to be among the trancendentals. He includes a full list of figures, from Theophilus to Origen, and Augustine down to Maximus the Confessor. Balthasar writes that beauty maintained a place of privilege in the early church because early theology had a highly developed doctrine of creation as well as a doctrine of redemption that included the perfecting of God's created order. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 38-39.
[85] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies & Fragments*, text, W. Harvey, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1857); iv.xx.
[86] Eric Osborne, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 202.
[87] Ibid., 193. Osborne is referencing an argument by R. Tremblay, *La manifestation et la vision de Dieu selon Saint Irenee de Lyon* (Munster, 1978).
[88] Ibid., 193.
[89] Ibid., 193.
[90] Put negatively, Osborne writes, "There is no life without participation in God and no participation without a vision of God and the enjoyment of his goodness." Ibid., 204.

beautiful. God is the architect of creation.[91] Coming from God, creation must be beautiful enough to reflect the beauty of its Creator, but not so beautiful as to lesson the infinite gap between God and His creation. To say that creation lacks beauty is to impoverish the very beauty of God. Conversely, an infinitely beautiful God *must* be capable of creating extraordinary beauty. Irenaeus suggests a framework for understanding the puzzle, "As regards His greatness, therefore, it is not possible to know God, for it is impossible that the Father can be measured; but as regards His love (for this it is which leads us to God by His Word)."[92] God's love bridges the gap, and God's love and human access to that love is through God's Word, the Son.[93] The full nature of God is unknowable, but God's love is knowable. The Incarnate Word is the clue to the riddle, much as he is the clue to history:

> "The vision of God in Irenaeus, for all its unqualified vigour, is integrated with entry into the mystery of God. God is seen directly in his son who is the face of the father. The incarnation is ultimate and concrete. God will be seen by those who are adopted in Christ, whom they seize, carry and embrace. Irenaeus' passion for the vision of God is not, as some have suggested, an alternative to conceptual thought: Irenaeus insists that both the truth and beauty, the logic and aesthetics of the Christian revelation can only be discovered through prolonged awareness of the saving presence of God in Christ."[94]

Irenaeus is making the striking claim, over against Gnostic thinking, that beauty is not found in some transcendent or Platonic Form, but in God made flesh. Jesus is the object of faith and the source of the Lord's glory.

As already stated, vision comes on the heels of manifestation. Participation then, in the life of the God-head, is the result of seeing and submitting: "When we obey Him, we do always learn that there is so great a God, and that it is He who by Himself has established, and selected, and adorned, and contains all things; and among all the things, both ourselves and this our world."[95] There it is: God establishes, selects, and *adorns* or "makes beautiful" His creation. The material

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[91] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ii.xv.ii.
[92] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, iv.xx.1.
[93] It is difficult not to assume Irenaeus is echoing 1 John 4:7ff.
[94] Osborne, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 204-205.
[95] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, iv.xx.1.

world is beautiful because a loving God makes it so. Notice the intentionality of God's creative process. For Irenaeus, God's beautiful world is such because God is ever involved in the whole of creation history and consummation. Furthermore, it is beautiful because, as Irenaeus concludes, creation is "contained" in God. Creation is beautiful as it originates from God and as it continues in relationship with God. Like Plato, Irenaeus assumes the objectivity of beauty; unlike him, however, Irenaeus sees creation not as an obstacle but rather an access point to the infinite beauty of God.[96] Creation is good, God has adorned it, and yet it is eternally insufficient to speak fully of God's nature. Out of love, God takes this good and well-adorned creation—dust and water, flesh and blood—and uses it as the building block for a new and beautiful language. We know God not in spite of creation but because of it, supremely in God putting on flesh. By inference, Irenaeus reminds us that to escape the materiality of our existence is to jettison God's revelation. Ireneaus' great contribution to theological aesthetics is to claim that what is beautiful communicates something of the Infinite to what is finite. God's self-communication *is* beauty.[97]

At eighteen Augustine read Cicero's *Hortensius*, which argued that true happiness and fulfillment were not found in self-indulgent pursuits of physical pleasures—sex, food, drink and possessions—but rather in the mind's disciplined quest for truth. Augustine was convinced. As a result, Augustine was drawn to Manichaeism, a third century Gnostic religion that despised the material world, including human reproduction. Whereas in his youth Augustine was drowning in beauty—of the wrong sort—in his twenties he was starving from lack of it. Both extremes found him restless, wanting for something more. At the age of thirty-two, Augustine finds himself, still struggling with enslavement to lust and worldly ambition, weeping in his garden. From a nearby house he hears a young child singing *tolle lege; tolle, lege* ("pick up and read, pick up and read"). Taken as a

[96] Irenaeus is one of the first Christian responses to a Platonic vision of the material world. Of course, the Jewish view is an even earlier counterbalance.
[97] Osborne concludes, "When we come to the end of all our pilgrimage our final vision shall be the face of him who was born of Mary." Osborne, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 210.

sign from God, Augustine finds and then opens his Bible to Romans 13:13-14, "Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts."[98] Augustine's response is, "I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled."[99] Augustine arrives at two very important conclusions: the power of pleasure, and the weakness of human desire:

> "Late have I loved you, beauty so old and new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours."[100]

These two things, the power of pleasure and the weakness of desire, stand at the heart of Augustine's contribution to theological aesthetics. Desire, for Augustine, is not too strong but rather too weak. The world is indeed lovely and beautiful, but it is also unable to fully satisfy. It is God who can put flight to blindness, open ears to hear, and satisfy hunger and thirst.

Few Church Fathers have discussed beauty more often than Augustine.[101] Beauty is immensely important for Augustine. Beauty *is* Christ and the Christ-like life. Beauty is the word Augustine uses to describe the whole of Christ's person and work. For Augustine, any discussion of beauty begins and ends with Christ.

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[98] Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.xii (29). Augustine quotes from the Septuagint?
[99] Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.xii (29).
[100] Augustine, *Confessions*, X.xxvii (38).
[101] Take as an example Augustine's commentary on Psalm 44 where "beauty" is mentioned seventeen times in five sentences: "Christ is beautiful wherever he is. Beautiful as God, as the Word who is with God, he is beautiful in the Virgin's womb, where he did not lose his godhead but assumed our humanity. Beautiful he is as a baby, as the Word unable to speak, because while he was still without speech, still a baby in arms and nourished at his mother's breast, the heavens spoke for him, a star guided the magi, and he was adored in the manger as food for the humble. He was beautiful in heaven, then and beautiful on earth: beautiful in the womb, and beautiful in his parents' arms. He was beautiful in his miracles but just as beautiful under the scourges, beautiful as he invited us to life, but beautiful too in not shrinking from death, beautiful in laying down his life and beautiful in taking it up again, beautiful on the cross, beautiful in the tomb, and beautiful in heaven."

As an example, Jason Byassee writes regarding Augustine's treatment of the Psalms, "As ever with Augustine, the proper place to begin an exploration of desire and beauty in the Psalms is with his Christology."[102] Carol Harrison adds:

> "By becoming man, Christ, who is divine truth, goodness, and beauty, enables man to perceive and to grasp these otherwise abstract ideas and principles and leads him to their truth centre and meaning in Himself, as God and as Trinity…. Human ideas of beauty, and the truth of divine Beauty, find their place and exposition here, that is in the incarnate revelation of divine Beauty in Christ, who reforms man from the ugliness of his sins, conforming him to his proper beauty or from in His image, by becoming deformed for him."[103]

In other words, if you want to explore beauty—in the Psalms, scripture as a whole, creation, or otherwise—then Christ is both where to begin and end. In addition, knowledge of the fullness of God comes in being able to behold beauty rightly. Much of Augustine's theology—his understanding of God, creation, history, providence, revelation and humanity—hinges on the question of beauty. Concerning creation, Augustine asks, "Do we love anything save what is? But what then is beautiful and what is beauty? What is it that allures us and delights us in the things we love? Unless there were grace and beauty in them they could not possibly draw us to them."[104] Our fallen-ness is not some fault of creation, but of our own making. It is right to find creation beautiful, and it is even right to be drawn to creation's grace and beauty. However, it is wrong to hold creation as an object rather than conduit of desire.

It is God's glory, revealed in Jesus Christ, that commences right reflection on God, leading to a relationship with God. This begins a long tradition, reintroduced by Hans Urs von Balthasar in the twentieth century, of claiming that the whole of Christian worship, doctrine, and ethic begins with beauty and not with reason.[105] The cosmos is ordered and re-ordered not by man's intellect or a projection of his consciousness but by a Beautiful God. It is the glory of the

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[102] Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 101.
[103] Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 192-193.
[104] Augustine, *Confessions*, IV.xiii (20).
[105] This is made implicit in the ordering of Balthasar's trilogy.

Lord and not man's reasoning, which is the creative and transforming agent of divine grace. Beholding the beauty of God is another way of reminding us that God makes humanity and not the other way around. God's glory in Jesus Christ reveals not only the nature and will of God but it also reveals the nature of man. Christ embodies not only the fullness of divinity but also the fullness of humanity. The beauty of God, revealed in the Incarnation, makes known to man what it means to be fully and truly human. In beholding beauty, humanity becomes more human, or more appropriately, desires to become more human. Again Byassee, "For Augustine the beauty of Christ and the refracted beauty of his figure in scripture are crucial to right interaction with human desire and growth toward *theosis*."[106] If the beauty of Christ is central to *theosis*, then losing the ability to behold beauty signals great trouble. For Augustine, cultivating the ability to see the beauty of God disciplines our disordered desire to know and long to become fully human.[107]

Drawing on Plotinus, Augustine asserts that the most mundane things have a corresponding beauty.[108] For Augustine, all of creation is beautiful, just not equally so, "My humble tongue makes confession to your transcendent majesty that you were maker of heaven and earth…For this physical totality, which is not in its entirety present in every part of it, has received a beautiful form in its very lowest things, and at the bottom is our earth."[109] So in one sense, in the way of a sliding scale or ladder of beauty, Augustine is representative of the Platonic tradition. But standing in the classic Christian tradition, Augustine asserts that

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[106] Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding*, 120.
[107] It is as human's love is rightly ordered that we come to see and move towards what it means to be created in the image of God. Carol Harrison writes, "By love of the world, Augustine observes here, the soul has become unknown to itself. It is only by acknowledging the Creator of the world that it can find itself again, learn to see, and correct its faults. The revelation of God thus reprimands the soul, corrects it and brings it to knowledge of itself as ugly and displeasing. The soul, consequently, confesses its ugliness and desires to be beautiful, so that whereas before she was scattered and lost in temporal reality, she is now recollected and unified in God." See Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 255.
[108] Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 5. In his early thirties, Augustine read Plotinus for the first time. In Plotinus, Augustine found of refutation of a Manichean understanding of evil as an "independent power which could impinge upon the good" (7). Through Plotinus, Augustine discovered that beauty is more than symmetry and harmony; instead, beauty is transcendent.
[109] Augustine, *Confessions*, XII.ii (2).

creation is not pre-existent material ordered by God but rather created *ex-nihilo*.[110] God is more than a divine craftsman. God is the Creator, and creation is not the Creator.[111] Even so, Augustine is well aware that all is not beautiful. Not only is there a spectrum of beauty, but there also exists the opposite of beauty: Evil has entered God's good creation. Augustine deals with evil in a unique way. Instead of evil being an obstacle to divine beauty, it is an occasion to reveal the infinite and transforming splendor of divine beauty. Harrison writes:

> "It is in this context that one finds an aesthetic of unity which is able to comprehend even the presence of evil and darkness in the world as part of a larger whole, and as contributing (even if it is only by way of the contrast of light and dark so that the light seems more brilliant when juxtaposed with blackness) to the total beauty and order of the universe in Augustine's thought…This aesthetic is therefore not so much a justification of evil, as a consideration of its place in God's universe—not as a hostile, alien principle which thereby tells against God's omnipotent rule (as in Manicheism)—but as something which is comprehended in His beautiful, providential ordering of it."[112]

It is not that Augustine does not take evil seriously enough; rather, Augustine is taking God's sovereignty more seriously. Good and evil, beauty and ugliness are not somehow participating in some equally matched cosmic clash. On the cross, the beauty of God confronts the ugliness of evil, and beauty triumphs.

At the end of James Joyce's novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the protagonist, Steven Daedalus, is engaged in a spirited conversation with his friend Lynch over the nature of beauty in light of Thomas Aquinas' theological aesthetics. In this context Daedalus coins the phrase "aesthetic arrest."[113] The phrase has become popular while the context and meaning to which it was originally attached has fallen out of fashion. Jettisoning Aquinas, "aesthetic arrest" has come to describe some complex psychological and quasi-spiritual personal, and often private, experience of the autonomous and sovereign self. This could not be farther from what Aquinas—or Joyce for that matter—intended

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[110] Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 100-101.
[111] Augustine, *Genesis* commentary 1:1
[112] Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 111.
[113] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003 Edition), Originally published in 1916 .

to express as a conception of beauty. Aquinas' well-known definition of beauty consists of *integritas*, *proportio*, and *claritas*, "For beauty includes three conditions, 'integrity' or 'perfection,' since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due 'proportion' or 'harmony'; and lastly, 'brightness' or 'clarity,' whence things are called beautiful which have bright colors."[114] First, *integritas* has much to do with the *telos* of an object. Something is beautiful if it functions to fulfill God's ordered and purposed final ends. Aquinas gives the example of a metal saw that is more beautiful than a glass saw because the glass saw is more likely to break and leave its purpose unfulfilled.[115] Second, *Proportio* has to do with right relationship. Something can be well proportioned within itself, within creation, and in relation to the will of God:

> "To exist is to exist as a relationship of essence and existence, as a specific thing. Further, there are the proportions that exist among the beings which compose the universe; the proportions of matter and form in human beings, and of intellect and reality in angels and humans; and the proportions of size and shape and color in material things. All these instance of *proportio* are likewise instance of beauty. Wherever there is right relationship—whether the rectitude flows from the will of God or from canons of human creativity—there is beauty."[116]

Thirdly, *claritas* is anything that fully participates in the divine clarity. Beauty "requires a certain splendor (*quamdam claritatem*), a quality of glory."[117] In another place Aquinas writes, "Hence it must be accepted, in the case of other things, that each one is called beautiful to the extent that it possesses a brightness of its own kind of either spiritual or corporeal and has been established in terms of a required proportion."[118] *Claritas* is that which is finite participating in the infinite light of God. It is the finite sharing in the infinite existence of God. *Claritas* is the reflection or emanation of God's divine and eternal light.

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[114] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton C. Pegis, vol. 1 (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1975), I.39.8.
[115] Aquinas, *SCG*, I.91.3.
[116] Francis J Caponi, O.S.A., "Beauty, Justice, and Damnation in Thomas Aquinas," *Pro Ecclesia* XIX, No. 4: 392.
[117] Aquinas, SCG, II.II.145.2. objection 2.
[118] *In De divinis nominibus*,

Beauty occurs when *claritas* is united with *integritas* and *proportio*. The uniting of these three is the occasion for "aesthetic arrest." As Robert Jenson summarizes, "That is beautiful which is a harmonious whole and is lucid in its harmony."[119] It is that "harmonious whole," according to Aquinas that causes pleasure upon being seen (*id quod visum placet*).[120]

The beauty of creation, to the degree it participates in the life of God, takes on a kind of evangelical and apologetic function. As Armand Maurer writes, the word "beauty" is identified in the Greek noun *to kalon* from the verb *kaleo*, meaning to call or summon.[121] Beauty is that transcendental, or ultimate reality, which beckons or attracts us to goodness and truth. The beauty of creation—that which exhibits *claritas*, *integritas*, and *proportio*—proclaims, convinces, and directs the beholder towards God. Put another way, Maurer writes, "The beautiful attracts us to look at it, but not to possess it, except in order that we might look at it more often and more attentively."[122] Maurer continues that the beautiful is not "completely satisfying in our present experience. The things we find good and beautiful beckon us beyond themselves to an ever more perfect goodness and beauty."[123] Aquinas gives creation a high calling.

Robert Barron, reflecting on Aquinas, calls creation "a sort of icon of the divine beauty, a mirror in which we see reflected some of the unbearable perfection of the divine being."[124] As a result, "The contemplation of the world constitutes a foretaste of the beautiful vision, the blissful and unobstructed seeing of God, which is our fulfillment in heaven."[125] Drawing on Francesca Aran Murphy, Stephen Wright argues, "beauty is the unification of the objective with the

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[119] Robert W. Jenson, "Beauty," in *Essays in Theology of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 147.
[120] As referenced in Stephen John Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetic*, 43 and Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), 132n63b.
[121] Armand A Maurer, *About Beauty: A Thomistic Interpretation* (Houstin: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1983) 105. *In Div. Nom*., c. 4, lect. 5, n. 340.
[122] Maurer, *About Beauty*, 18.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Robert Barron, *Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Crossroads, 2008), 142-143.
[125] Ibid., 142-143.

subjective in a single act of aesthetic apprehension."[126] Wright continues, "This tradition of thinking about beauty maintains that an invisible infinite depth becomes visible through a finite form. For beauty to be sensible, the bounding of form is necessary…When the limiting finite form is stripped away, we are left standing before an overawing unmediated infinitude—a sublimity."[127] Predicating that all beauty is revealed, Balthasar hints at the supreme form that beauty takes and its subsequent ability to totally envelope us in its embrace: "Only that which has form can snatch one up into a state of rapture. Only through form can the lightning-bolt of eternal beauty flash."[128]

Aquinas maintains that creation is beautiful only in so far as it participates in the life of the Triune God. Maurer writes, "So the three notes of beauty: radiance, order and integrity, are found in God, not imperfectly as in creatures, but perfectly and supremely. Thus God is eminently beautiful, in the proper sense of the word. Beauty, however, is not the first perfection or name of God. That is 'He Who Is.' God's beauty, like the beauty of all things, is but one facet of his being or actual existence."[129] Despite creation's high calling it is ever and always inadequate and without perfection. This is one reason, as noted by Jacques Maritain, that sorrow and grief often accompany the experience of beauty.[130] The beauty of creation is not only imperfect but it is also fleeting—flowers wither and fade, sunsets give way to darkness, and new love settles into routine. Again, the beauty of creation, rightfully engaged, does not capture us but ought to propel us to the more perfect beauty of God. It does so precisely because it imperfectly shares in divine beauty. It provokes desire for something itself cannot fully satisfy, encouraging humanity to continue on its quest. Even at man's ultimate contemplation of creation, something is still lacking, and this is as it should be. "Man reaches the peak of his knowledge of God," writes Aquinas, "when he realizes that he does not know Him, understanding that the divine

[126] Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics*, 30.
[127] Ibid.,, 30.
[128] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 1:32.
[129] Maurer, *About Beauty*, 115.
[130] See Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 167.

reality surpasses all human conceptions of it."[131] Left with an unbridgeable chasm, Christ enters as beauty in the flesh. "All other persons are good-looking," writes Aquinas, "only by participating in beauty; Christ was completely lovely to behold for He was beauty itself."[132] Christ *is* beauty, while all others are beautiful only as they relate to Christ.

Robert Jenson, drawing on Aquinas, argues that, "Westerners who have attributed being to God have also tended to teach that God is intrinsically knowable."[133] We know God, specifically the Triune God, through certain "convertible" concepts related to being itself.[134] These "convertible" concepts are what we have been calling "transcendentals."[135] If the Triune God is true and good *and* beautiful, then knowing God, as is fully possible, is limited when one of these transcendentals has gone missing from our epistemology. In relation to these three transcendentals, Jenson argues "adjectivally," that God is "knowable, lovable and enjoyable."[136] This leads Jenson to state, "None of the three [transcendentals] can be understood in isolation from the others."[137] What is at stake in the loss of beauty is nothing short than the loss of God's know-ability in the human frame. Jenson ends his conversation on beauty by summarizing Aquinas': "The discourse that is God is not other than its sheer occurrence as the divine perichoresis." This leads Jenson to conclude, "The apprehension of God as beauty, in its concrete abstraction, has led us to another proposition…in which we said that God is an event, a person, a decision, and a conversation. The phrase 'the one God' directs us finally to the sheer perichoresis of Father, Son, and Spirit…."[138] It is towards this beautiful dance that Aquinas invites that

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[131] Aquinas, *De Potentia*, VII, 5, ad 14. See *In Div. Nom.,* c. 7, lect. 4, n. 732 (footnote in Maurer).
[132] Maurer, *About Beauty*, 119.
[133] Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune God*, vol. 1 of *Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 224. Jenson cites in 224n2, "Thus according to Thomas Aquinas God knows himself, and we can even in this life share that knowledge; *De veretate*, 14:8: 'Fides…hominen divinae cognitione coniungit per assensum.'"
[134] Idid., 225.
[135] Ibid. As Jenson makes notes, medieval thinkers often added a fourth transcendental, unity.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., 236.

pastor's gaze. And in so doing, the pastor may graciously find that he is invited into this beautifully sacred dance.[139]

Arguably, beauty has played a more important role in Jonathan Edwards' theology than any other Calvinist writer that preceded or has followed him. Roland Delattre wrote, "Beauty is fundamental to Edwards' understanding of being. It is the first principle of being, the inner, structural principle of being-itself."[140] Robert Jenson wrote, "Edwards' religion was from its root—with or without what he could have called conversion and with or without Newton and Locke—a sheer adoration of God's majesty, and that is for Edwards to say, a sheer beholding of God's beauty."[141] In Edwards own words:

> "And as I was walking there and looking up into the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction…it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness…I remember the thought I used then to have of holiness…It appeared to me that there was nothing in it but what was ravishingly lovely."[142]

Edwards makes a distinction between "primary beauty" and "secondary beauty."[143] The former has to do with spiritual beauty and the latter with physical beauty. There is a further distinction. Primary beauty has to do with the "consent" or love between two or more "perceiving beings" (humans), while secondary beauty is agreement between non-sentient objects.[144] Of physical or secondary beauty, Edwards wrote, "The beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents, either within itself or with the supreme being. As to the corporeal world, though there are many other sorts of contents, yet the sweetest

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[139] Ibid., 226. Jenson makes the beautiful point that the communal life of Father, Son, and Spirit is such that others can be brought into that life: "God can indeed, if he chooses, accommodate other persons in his life without distorting that life. God, to state it as boldly as possible, is *roomy*…He can, if he chooses, distinguish himself from others not by excluding them but by including them."
[140] Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards; An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 1.
[141] Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University of Press, 1988), 15.
[142] Jonathan Edwards, "Memoirs of President Edwards," *Works* (New York: Leavitt, 1849), I:16. Quoted in Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 15.
[143] WJE 8:565
[144] WJE 8:561-568

and most charming beauty of it is its resemblance of spiritual beauties."[145] The highest beauty is that which is able to mirror the self-giving consent, love, and affection of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Nature then is beautiful when it is able, as Edwards claims, to "image" or "shadow" primary beauty.[146] As McClymond and McDermott sum up, "Yet the Creator's handiwork in the natural world was really only an antechamber to the sanctuary of beauty. It was in the realm of spirit that one found true beauty."[147] In Edwards own words:

> "The Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate himself in an image of his own excellency (beauty). He communicates himself properly only to spirits; and they only are capable of being proper images of his excellency, for they only are properly beings…Yet he communicates a sort of shadow or glimpse of his excellencies to bodies, which as we have seen, are but the shadows of being, and not real beings.[148]

For Edwards, beauty is solidly objective; and yet, at times Edwards seems to be suggesting that beauty is subjective. Delattre responds, "Taken together, beauty and sensibility may be said to be the objective and subjective components of the moral or spiritual life."[149] McClymond and McDermott further explain, "For Edwards, beauty was both objective and subjective. Beauty had an effect, and the effect was an affect (i.e., feeling)."[150] Edwards calls this feeling or perception of beauty a "sense of the heart." For our purposes, it is important to point out that this "sense of the heart" is damaged by humanity's fallen nature and is only fully repaired, reborn, and renewed as a work of the Triune God. The capacity to sense beauty flows from God's redeeming and sanctifying activity through Christ and the ongoing influence of the Spirit. Edwards wrote, "The first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration, is to give the heart a divine taste or

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[145] WJE 6:305
[146] WJE 11:50-130
[147] Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2011), 95.
[148] WJE 13:279. "Excellency" in these notes by Edwards is explicitly linked to "that which is beautiful and lovely." Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 24.
[149] Quoted in McClymond and McDermott, 99.
[150] McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 99.

sense, to cause it to have relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the divine nature."[151]

Interestingly enough, the very first effect of divine grace is the repairing of man's ability to behold the beautiful. This is of upmost significance, because, for Edwards, beauty is fundamental to understanding and, more importantly, knowing God. Robert Jenson connects this to Edwards teaching on justification. For Edwards, Christ does more than atone for our sins; rather, he "purchases heaven for us."[152] Consequently, Jenson warns, "The instant the sheer beauty of Christ, and that positive salvation which lies in our captivation by it, departs from the center of the church's life, Christianity becomes, to Edwards' contempt, a religious insurance scheme."[153] As a result for the modern pastor, he is left without a compelling apologetic.

Although he may sound like it at times, it is important to note that Edwards is not a modern Gnostic.[154] His ascent to spiritual beauty is not a departure from the material world.[155] Rather, for Edwards, it is divine grace, enlivening the "sense of the heart," that transforms one to see the true beauty of God's likewise transformed or transforming creation. Edwards writes:

> "After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered: there seems to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything: in the sun, moon and stars: in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees, in the water, and all nature; which used to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon, for a long time, and so in the day time, spend much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory in these things."[156]

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[151] WJE 21:174
[152] *Miscellanies*, 247.
[153] Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 60.
[154] Ibid., 36-37.
[155] Ibid., 16. The beauty of the natural world is a constant theme in Edward's writings. As Jenson explains, "Beauty is not an abstract concept for Edwards, it is his word for what he immediately loves in reality as it presents itself to him. So it is while walking the river watching the clouds that he is given 'a sense' of the beauty of God." Ibid.
[156] 16:793-794

Sang Hyun Lee comments:

> "Edwards's perception of the beauty of God in nature did not transport him away form the concrete objects in nature in which God's beauty appeared. The sense ideas of the grass, flowers, and trees remained firmly in his mind, and the proportion of beauty he saw in these natural objects (appreciated as the images of the full manifestation and repetition of God's beauty in Jesus Christ) was the very material content of his perception of the beauty of God. Again, nothing is transcended, nor does any abstraction from these concrete things occur. The mind is not taken away from this world into another one, but instead sees the things of this world in a new way."[157]

Edwards takes things one-step further. As the "sense of the heart" is sharpened by divine grace, it not only produces an aesthetic awakening, but also a more constitutive transformation. McClymond and McDermott write, "As the saints perceive and respond to God's beauty, they themselves acquire a beauty that is 'the moral image of God in them.'"[158] Foreshadowing the work of von Balthasar, Edwards boldly claims that as a person, by God's grace, beholds and embodies more fully the beauty of God in Word and world, then that person is formed more in the moral image God. A significant emphasis of Edward's theological aesthetics was his accent on the relational nature—what he calls "mutual consent"—of beauty. Beauty is the result of distinct objects relating to and giving of themselves in accordance with their nature and God's design. As already alluded to, we humans not only come to *perceive* beauty more clearly by yielding to God, but we actually *become* beautiful by consenting to a relationship with him, a relationship made possible only through the radical and prior consent of Christ making his way from manger to Cross.

A World Without Beauty

As outlined above, Beauty has a long history of being essential for meaning making. For Plato beauty is one of the three building blocks of ultimate reality. For Irenaeus beauty establishes the greatness of God. For Clement beauty serves to educate desire and invites fallen humanity into God's re-creation.

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[157] Sang Hyun Lee, "Edwards and Beauty," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2009), 123.
[158] McClymond and McDermott 100 quoting Edwards 2:258.

Augustine emphasizes beauty's role in re-ordering desire, its centrality to theosis, making us more fully human, more fully like Christ. Augustine also gives a framework for acknowledging and dealing redemptively with the opposite of beauty: evil. Aquinas then gives us the criteria and language to discern what is beautiful and what is ugly. And Jonathan Edwards, somewhat surprising for a New England puritan, does not shy away from the language of affection, desire and *eros*, giving us beauty's calling as that which draws the church into intimacy with the Triune God.

Given beauty's central role in history, it is no wonder its absence is an occasion of crisis within pastoral ministry. Goodness and truth—no matter how well attended to—fail to fully articulate and defend the faith. Without beauty, the church loses its greatest apologetic. Without beauty, pastors lose their sense of identity and calling.

Given beauty's place of privilege in the history of Western thought, its modern demise is quite remarkable. Due to a number of developments in the modern era, beauty faced a steady decline.[159] As Daniel Treier and Mark Husbands remark:

> "Discoveries in astronomy and in physics made it all impossible to reconcile classical ideals of symmetry with a dawning awareness of the sprawling and ragged particularity of the physical universe. In turn, advances in scientific understanding fed a rapidly growing appetite for technological mastery, which to this day remains unsated. Add to this mix a growing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century emphasis on individual particularities and cultural differences, and it

[159] See Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 156. Beauty seemed to have little place in modernity except possibly as a pleasant diversion. Romanticism heroically failed to redeem beauty. Ironically, the world turned to the new religion of science. It promised to make the world right, but as Charles Taylor argues science was far less equipped to deal with evil than beauty ever was, at least beauty as understood in pre-modernity: "Science just negates, denies this whole dimension of dark forces. We are now reassured, our fears calmed. But our sense of them remains in two ways: first, the fascination with the idea of such force, and the benign counter-forces; so much of popular stories, films, art, recreates them (Star Trek, Lord of the Rings, Matrix, Pullman, Harry Potter). We give ourselves frissons, while still holding the reality at bay. Second, they reemerge in modes of diabolical evil which we find ourselves involved in (Holocaust, genocides, Gulags, Killing fields, etc.). Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 741.

> seems in retrospect hardly surprising that the classical ideal of beauty was displaced from the center to the periphery of modern thought."[160]

Add to this list the horrors of war, particularly the twentieth-century, and it is no wonder that beauty has gone missing from any meaningful discourse. As beauty was reduced to the sublime it became superficial and trivial. Beauty became, at best, a means of diversion in a world filled with ugliness. Arthur Danto writes, "Beauty…disappeared not only from the advanced art of the 1960s, but from advanced philosophy of art of that decade as well…[It] rarely came up in art periodicals from the 1960s without a deconstructionist snicker."[161]

Beauty, according to the modern critic, has little to do with good art because beauty involves sentimentality. David Bentley Hart argues that beauty's demise is, yes, due to a modern "ontology of violence."[162] However, the real nail in beauty's coffin was not violence but sublimity. Hart writes:

> "The event of modernity within philosophy…consisted of the dissolution of being: the disintegration of that radiant unity wherein the good, the true, and the beautiful coincided as infinite simplicity and fecundity, communicating themselves to a world whose only reality was its variable participation in their gratuity; and the divorce between this thought of being, as the supereminent fullness of all perfection, and the thought of God (who could then no longer be conceived as being and the well spring of all being, revealing his glory in the depth of splendor in which created things are shaped and sustained."[163]

Truth, goodness, and beauty have persisted but not as transcendentals. While not on the scope, scale, and nature of modern warfare, the world has always known violence of one kind or another. In fact, from the moment Cain struck down Abel, the scriptures of ancient Israel right through Good Friday are full of hostility, aggression, and senseless brutality. The key to beauty's integrity in the face of ugliness is that it is not synonymous with sublimity but convertible with

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[160] Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands and Roger Lundin, *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 7-8.
[161] Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 25. As referenced in Jeremy Begbie, "Beauty , Sentimentality and the Arts," in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*, eds. Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands and Roger Lundin (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 45.
[162] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 35.
[163] Ibid., 44.

being and in unity with truth and goodness. Beauty is not a diversion from the harshest of realities but rather an aesthetic narration of a particular story centered on the God who brought Israel out of Egypt and raised Jesus from the dead. The good news is in God's power to bend that which is false to the truth, that which is evil to the good, and that which is ugly to the beautiful.[164]

Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510-1511) adorns the *Stanze della Segnatura* in the Vatican's *Palazzi Pontifici*. Raphael's fresco depicts many of the great thinkers of Antiquity—Pythagoras, Diogenes, Heracleitus, Euclid and others. The two central characters, standing under the massive vaulted ceiling, are Plato holding his *Timeus* and Aristotle his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Plato, lifting his right hand, points upward to the real world of Form and Ideas. Aristotle instead gestures towards the concrete world before him. While Plato and Aristotle disagreed on much—Plato was interested in the world we cannot see, whereas Aristotle was interested in the world we can see—the directions of their right hands hint at something in common. Where Plato and Aristotle do agree is to say that beauty is objective, it is a transcendental, and it is "not localized in the response of the beholder."[165] A person's experience of pleasure, delight, or joy does not make something beautiful; rather, beauty is the origin of such responses.

Figuratively speaking, in 1790 Immanuel Kant is added to Raphael's *School of Athens*. But instead of pointing upward, like Plato, or outwards, like Aristotle, the modern philosopher, holding Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, points to himself. Beauty's disconnection from Plato's Demiurge and Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, hastens beauty's modern migration from the objective to the subjective. The eighteenth century would be uncharitable to all three ancient transcendentals. Of these three, beauty would suffer the greatest defeat. Romanticism would see

[164] Begbie, "Beauty, Sentimentality, and the Arts," 46. Begbie writes, "All depends on being prepared to think and rethink beauty in the light of the acts and being of the triune God, and in this context that means paying particular attention to the narrative of God Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day. Only in this way will we be able to disentangle the pursuit of beauty from sentimentality…."
[165] Crispin Sartwell, *Beauty*, 4.

beauty as a shooting star—brightest just before it flames out and falls forever from view. Eventually this would lead Paul Tillich to write, "In and after the First World War, the belief in the arts as a substitute for religion broke down. Art was not able to meet the catastrophes of the 20th century."[166] From the lofty heights of Plato's world of Forms and Ideas, beauty descends into and becomes imprisoned in the "eye of the beholder."[167]

It is an oversimplification to say that history shifted from a totally objectivist to subjectivist perspective on beauty.[168] Some mix of the two is found throughout. Take as an example the aforementioned Jonathan Edwards and his "sense of the heart." However, it is clear that a significant shift occurred in the eighteenth century. By then, David Hume could write:

> Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment without pretending to regulate those of others."[169]

Likewise, Immanuel Kant could write in his *The Critique of Judgment*:

> The judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be no other than subjective. Every reference of representations, even that of sensations, may be objective (and then it signifies the real element of an empirical representation), save only the reference to the feeling of pleasure and pain, by which nothing in the object is signified, but through which there is a feeling in the subject as it is affected by the representation."[170]

Notice the wedge Kant forces between what is "logical" and what is "aesthetical." For Kant, judgments of beauty are based fundamentally on feelings. And these are primarily feelings of pleasure. However, these feelings of pleasure are what

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[166] As quoted in Richard Harries, *Art and the Beauty of God* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 5.
[167] Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 157. The radical shift that took place during and following the Enlightenment meant "art now was to be enjoyed aesthetically for its own sake, beauty being in the eye of the beholder, in the imagination of the individual."
[168] Ibid., 157. Even Kant did not hold an exclusively subjectivist view. He understood beauty to be both "necessary and subjective—as they are based on feeling—yet they claim university." This universality can only be validated based on "consensus or common sense."
[169] As quotes by Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 136.
[170] Kant 1790, section 1.

Kant calls “disinterested.” Kant means two things: one, that feelings of pleasure do not depend on the subject having a desire for the object, and two, that the object does not engender desire in the subject. Put another way, the object in question is not the antecedent of pleasure. Kant does attempt to say that there is what he calls “subjective universal validity.” Rachel Zuckert explains, “We misspeak, then, when we say that an *object* is beautiful; more properly, we should say, ‘I take pleasure in representing this object, and all should take pleasure in it too (though for no specifiable reason, on the basis of no objective property of the object.’”[171] He assumes that if one finds beauty and pleasure in an object then others must as well. Kant weakens his own claim to universal validity by saying that judgments of beauty cannot be proved and that there are no guidelines or criteria by which to judge that something is beautiful. In Kant, as with other eighteenth century philosophers, beauty as an ultimate value descends into subjectivism more rapidly and fully than both matters related to truth and goodness.[172]

By the mid-twentieth century the world was nearly without beauty. Even the art world had lost interest. Explaining his porcelain urinal, *Fountain* (1917), Marcel DuChamp says, “My idea was to choose an object that wouldn’t attract me either by its beauty or by its ugliness. To find a point of indifference in my looking at it. You might say I found any number of those. But at the same time, not so much even like it. And the minute I liked it I would discard it.”[173] Art was no longer interested or aware of beauty, leaving art unsure of its purpose and existence. Again DuChamp, “I don’t care about the word ‘art’ because it has been so discredited. So I want to get rid of it. There is an unnecessary adoration of ‘art’ today…I want to get rid of art like we’ve gotten rid of religion.”[174]

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[171] Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 175.
[172] Ginsborg, Hannah, "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/kant-aesthetics/>. 7-8.
[173] Joan Bakewell’s 1966 BBC television interview with Marcel DuChamp.
[174] Ginsborg, *Kant’s Aesthetic*, 8.

Another important idea for Kant, as described by Ginsborg, is that "unlike judgments of the good, judgments of the beautiful do not presuppose an end or purpose which the object is taken to satisfy."[175] This is another way of saying that judgments of aesthetics have no teleology, and stand in contrast to Aquinas' earlier definition. In a Kantian worldview, judgments of beauty become irrelevant. They are powerless to illuminate, comprehend, and affect change in the world. Beauty has no value accept what pleasure a subject can ascribe.

Beauty, as a transcendental, has been demoted and democratized. The paradox is that this world without beauty often appears inundated with beauty—beauty that is equated with sentimentality.[176] As Augustine taught, desire for beauty is at the heart of the human experience. When it has gone missing, imitations spring up en masse. When the light of Divine Beauty is absent, unrecognized, ignored or distorted, then the human impulse is to assemble its own vision of beauty. This essentially human vision of beauty lays the foundation for the further "de-" and then "re-" construction of truth and goodness, of reality itself.

Ours, one could easily conclude, is a beauty-obsessed culture. However, our obsession is with a conceptualization of beauty that separates creation from revelation. The material is separated from that which it ultimately owes its very being. The upshot is that the material world—however cleverly humans may arrange it—becomes beauty-less. John Milbank writes, "In modernity, therefore, there is no mediation of the invisible in the visible, and no aura of invisibility hovering around the visible. In consequence there is no beauty."[177] When we disconnect revelation and creation, we end up constructing or rearranging the world to satisfy the distorted desires of a people bent under the weight of sin. It is this human-centered reality that leaves us always searching for something more, perpetually restless, that is, until we pray with St Augustine, "Thou hast

[175] Ibid. 8.
[176] Begbie, "Beauty, Sentimentality, and the Arts," 45.
[177] Milbank, *Beauty and Soul*, in *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*, ed. John Milbank et al. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003) 3.

made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts our restless until they find their rest in thee."[178] Beauty becomes then not a self-disclosing gift from God but a projection of a collective or individual will. The result is the cacophonous, dissonant, almost dizzying display of sights and sounds that bombard us daily, clamoring for our attention, our treasures, and our worship. Richard Harries writes, "Beauty is one of those big words that modern philosophy tiptoes around…it is also a word that in ordinary conversation is liable to bring up so much gush, what T.S. Eliot termed 'undisciplined squads of emotion.'"[179] Unfortunately, pastors are as attuned as everyone else to recognize what Harries calls "gush" while the ability to apprehend something far more substantial has gone missing.

Finally, to equate beauty with "gush" or sentimentality is to signal beauty's final death toll. Begbie outlines at least three reasons why this is the case. First, writes Begbie, "The pursuit of beauty is suspected as an offense against truth, a lie in the midst of a world so obviously not beautiful."[180] Beauty as sentimentality is incapable of accurately representing reality in the face of evil. Second, "The pursuit of beauty is suspected as an offense against goodness, in that it distracts us from our ethical obligations to others in need, and distracts those unjustly suffering from the wrongness of their plight."[181] In other words, beauty has become a distraction to facing the evils of our age. Third, Begbie concludes, "Beauty is suspected as 'harmonizing away' the evilness of evil."[182] In other words, a modern understanding of beauty has come to trivialize evil. Evil is somehow granted a rationality, which leads one to believe that God has some hand in designing evil.

[178] St Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[179] Harries, *Art and the Beauty of God*, 2.
[180] Begbie, "Beauty, Sentimentality, and the Arts," 57.
[181] Ibid., 58.
[182] Ibid., 59.

A Reformed Parish Without Beauty

We have examined the role of beauty in the West, its long place of privilege as one of the three great transcendentals convertible with being, and its modern decline. We now draw closer to exploring the even more inexplicable loss of beauty in the parish. All of this is with an eye towards understanding how the pastor, failing to acquire the skills necessary to apprehend the beauty of God, falls captive to modern metaphors for ministry that do little to aid the pastor in recognizing the glory of God and the gift of God's call.

Former bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, recounts a story of the poet Wilfred Owen, who once considered and explored a calling to the priesthood. Owen spent time discerning this call while working as a lay assistant in a Church of England parish. Following his death in 1918, a letter was discovered belonging to Owen and addressed to the parish priest under whom he had served. It reads, "To Vicar…the Christian life affords no imagination, physical sensation, aesthetic philosophy."[183] Owen's indictment, in light of the historic claims about the God revealed in Scripture, ought to seem quite odd. How can a faith that claims a God who leads by pillars of fire, parts seas, takes on flesh, and empties tombs be short on imagination and beauty, or aesthetic philosophy? Christianity without aesthetics is a faith without Christ, or, as David Bentley Hart puts it, "Beauty is a category indispensible to Christian thought; all that theology says of the triune life of God, the gratuity of creation, the incarnation of the Word, and the salvation of the world makes room for—indeed depends upon—a thought, and a narrative, of the beautiful."[184] If beauty is indispensible then why has it gone missing in the parish?

One significant factor, at the heart of the church's uneasiness with beauty, is a suspicion of aesthetics, or the epistemological capabilities of the human senses: Could the senses be trusted to see, and to a lesser extent hear, God rightly?

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[183] Richard Harries, *Art and the Beauty of God: A Christian Understanding* (London: Continuum, 1993), 1.
[184] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 16.

The Reformation answer is a resounding "no." Due to the effects of sin, humanity lacks both the capacity to perceive and then choose the true and the good. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation called into question what they perceived as the medieval church's dependence upon the senses to mediate an experience of the Divine. The underlying concern was what appeared to be a morally and doctrinally bankrupt church, particularly at the level of the priesthood and the Magisterium. The Reformers linked this impoverishment to idolatry. Surely, went the thinking, if God is rightly worshipped then hearts and minds are being formed in such a way as to reflect, honor, and imitate the object of adoration.

The loser, in the Reformation and to a lesser extent the Counter-Reformation, was beauty—the realm of aesthetics, sights and sounds, smells and touch. The Reformers believed, due to sin and the attractive power of the material world, that the senses could not be relied upon to appropriately apprehend true beauty.[185] This is not to say, for Calvin, that the material world is bad; rather, it is to say something about the depth of the human condition. Carlos Eire writes, "Calvin argues that the fallen man is separated from God by a cognitive gulf that can only be bridged by grace and revelation, since his faculties have been impaired in two ways: His natural gifts have been corrupted and his spiritual gifts have been completely taken away."[186] Add to this Calvin's insistence on the utter transcendence of God and we begin to see the Reformed priority of the "spiritual" over the "material." Eire continues:

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[185] On either side of Calvin, with widely varying concerns regarding images, would be Luther and Zwingli. Luther was not opposed to the visual arts, but did caution against arts that were found idolatrous in nature. Luther encouraged illustrations of biblical texts, and religious illustrations, especially those representing Old Testament stories. Luther welcomed music in worship and wrote his own hymns. He did not limit congregational singing to the versification of the Psalms or Biblical canticles. Zwingli was the pastor in Zurich. In 1525, he completely abolished images, paintings, music, and the entire mass from worship. Peter and Linda Murray, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art & Architecture*, ed. Tom Devonshire Jones, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 325, 652. See also Conrad L. Donakowski, "The Age of Revolutions," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship,* eds. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen Westerfield Tucker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 375.

[186] Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 203.

> "Calvin forcefully asserted God's transcendence through the principle of *finitum non est capax infiniti* and his omnipotence through *soli Deo gloria*. To make others aware of this dual realization, Calvin systematically juxtaposed the divine and the human, contrasted the spiritual and the material, and placed the transcendent and omnipotent solus of God above the contingent multiple of man and the created world. Calvin's attack on Roman Catholic 'idolatry' is a condemnation of the improper mixing of spiritual and material in worship—an affirmation of the principle *finitum non est capax infiniti*. It is also an indictment of man's attempt to domesticate God and to rob him of his glory—and affirmation of the principle *soli Deo gloria*."[187]

The Reformers were well aware that human beings were embodied creatures, able only to experience the world as aesthetic, or sensing beings. However, human senses had lost their ability at the Fall to apprehend not only knowledge of God but also honest knowledge of the self.[188] As the Reformation took hold Protestants would embrace the battle against idolatry to the detriment of beauty, which gradually conceded aesthetic judgments to a newly emerging secular world. The irony, lost on descendants of the Reformation, was that Calvin took action because he understood both the power and vulnerability of man's embodied-ness, along with the seriousness of sin and the high-calling of creation.[189] The unfortunate consequence was that beauty became an enemy rather than an ally of truth and goodness, leading to a greater irony: absent of beauty, truth and goodness lost their attractiveness and, some might add, even their reason for being.[190]

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[187] Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 197-198. *Finitum non est capax infiniti* (the finite cannot contain the infinite). *Soli Deo gloria* (to God alone be the glory).

[188] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.i.1.

[189] Calvin makes it clear that idolatry is the fault not of God's good creation but of humanity's fallenness. "For as long as our views are bounded by the earth, perfectly content with our own righteousness, wisdom and strength, we fondly flatter ourselves and fancy we are little less than demigods. But if we once elevate our thoughts to God, and consider his nature, and the consummate perfection of His righteousness, wisdom, and strength, to which we ought to be conformed—what before charmed us in ourselves under the false pretext of righteousness, will soon be loathed as the greatest iniquity; what strangely deceived us under the title of wisdom, will be despised as extreme folly; and what wore the appearance of strength, with be proved to be most wretched impotence. So very remote from the divine purity is what seems in us the highest perfection." *Institutes*, I.xi.i.

[190] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 2, *Seeing the Form* (San Franscisco: Ignatius, 1984), 18-20.

It is not difficult to see how John Calvin's writings could have contributed to the demise and disappearance of beauty from the parish. Calvin provided plenty of fuel to light the fires of iconoclasm. His often quoted, "Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols," is indicative of Calvin's broader charge against the medieval church's abuse of the Second Commandment (Ex 20:4; Deut 5:8).[191] For Calvin, the church's physical adornments, music, liturgy, priestly vestments and trappings, practices, the Magisterium, and the Mass itself had amounted to idolatry. Because of his real and perceived ranting, Calvin is often mistaken as some sort of ecclesiastical killjoy. Beneath the surface of Calvin's diatribes is a deep pastoral concern, one that unfolds in his discussion on the already referenced Second Commandment. Calvin writes, "The commandment has two parts. The first restrains our license from daring to subject God, who is incomprehensible, to our sense perceptions, or to represent him by any form. The second part forbids us to worship any images in the name of religion."[192] Calvin is concerned that we would hold too low an opinion of God, and that conversely we would hold to high opinion of the created order; thus, conflating the two, creation with Creator. Calvin knows that not all images are beautiful.

Calvin is thoroughly convinced that the unaided human senses, both finite and fallen, are unable to apprehend the beauty of God. Calvin makes this point repeatedly and rather forcefully, so much so, that the argument gets lifted out of a larger and more nuanced discussion on the relationship between word and image. The ability to apprehend knowledge of God, warns Calvin, is not only impossible but it also offends the very person of God and thus risks incurring his wrath. Likening God and church as husband and wife, Calvin writes, "The more holy and chaste a husband is, the more wrathful he becomes if he sees his wife inclining her heart to a rival. In like manner, the Lord who has wedded us to himself in truth, manifests the most burning jealously whenever we, neglecting the purity of his holy marriage, become polluted with wicked lusts. But he

[191] Calvin, *Institutes*, I.XI.8.
[192] *Institutes* II.VIII. 17.

especially feels this when we transfer to another or stain with some superstition the worship of his divine majesty, which deserved to be utterly uncorrupted."[193] In other words, idolatry is not just morally wrong it is fatal. It is bad enough, so says Calvin, to show principal worth to something other than God. It is another thing entirely, to assign the Triune God's attributes to infinitely lesser rivals. Calvin surmised that the most convincing and damaging idols are the ones we construct with our own hands. Idols are perilous in and of themselves, but even more so because they incur God's wrath and just judgment. Threatened with the possibility of incurring the wrath of God, it is no wonder the Reformed Tradition removed beauty not only from its pedestal but also from the church as a whole. It was only a matter of time then that the church's anxiety over beauty would impact the Christian life outside of the parish walls as well.[194] For clergy, this meant a shifting of energy and resources, intellectual and otherwise, away from apprehending beauty to combating idolatry.

For various reasons, Calvinism grew more suspicion of seeing rather than hearing. Calvin attributed very little "epistemological value to visual art."[195] Calvin, commenting on Deuteronomy 4:12, "Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of his words, but you saw no form; there was only a voice," writes, "It is a confirmation of the Second Commandment, that God manifested himself to the Israelites by a voice, and not in a bodily form; whence it follows that those who are not contented with his voice, but seek his visible form, substitute imaginations and phantoms in his place." Never mind that God, in Jesus Christ, manifested himself in the Incarnation. Still, in the Incarnation, the full weight of God's glory is veiled in Christ's humanity, in the divine Word or *logos*. In response to Gregory the Great's, "images are the books of the

[193] *Institutes* II.VIII.18.
[194] It is worth noting that Calvin did not banish the visual arts from the broader society. In fact, his opposition to the visual arts was limited to the worship context. And even at that, his opposition was not nearly as extreme as would become the case among later Reformers. Christopher Richard Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts: A Re-Assessment* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 1, 3.
[195] Ibid., 54.

uneducated," Calvin writes that God " has set forth the preaching of his Word as a common doctrine for all."[196]

Even though Calvin's word of caution concerning images is explicitly linked to the Second Commandment's prohibition about visually representing God, the succeeding generations of Reformers would apply Calvin's distrust of images far more liberally. They seemed to lose some of the sophistication necessary for seeing that not all images are beautiful, but neither are all images ugly or harmful either. As a consequence, the Reformation suspicion of images and resulting iconoclasm would extend well beyond the religious context and into the broader culture.[197] The liberal application of the Second Commandment was another blow to beauty's place in the parish. As John Tonkin reminds us, this over-extended iconoclasm was not unique to the inheritors of the Reformation nor was it necessarily the intent of the original Reformers, "The phenomenon of iconoclasm, the destruction of religious images, was neither unique to the Reformation period nor intrinsic to Reformation society. Few people today would see it as anything but deplorable and misguided, yet historical awareness requires us to acknowledge that its motivation was not the destruction of beauty because it is beautiful but the prohibition of idolatry."[198]

Tonkin's distinction was lost on many of the descendents of the Reformation, resulting in the further marginalization of the beautiful. The consensus has long

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[196] As quoted in Randall C Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2007), 3. This would be later reflected in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646), I.6, "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."

[197] One example of the broadening impact of Reformation iconoclasm is Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strassbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). A treatment of how the Reformation suspicion of images changed visual arts can be found in Angela Vanhaelen, *The Wake of Iconoclasm: Painting the Church in the Dutch Republic* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania State Press, 2012). An example of how literature was impacted is James Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imaging the Book in Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania State Press, 2009). These are just a few examples of how the initial concern over the abuse of the Second Commandment fanned broadly across the culture.

[198] John Tonkin, "Word and Image: Luther and the Arts," *Colloquium* 17, no. 2 (May 1, 19985), 46. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (Accessed May 15, 2013).

since been that Calvin, and by extension Calvinism, privileged hearing over seeing, where God is concerned. Edward Dowey, in his classic book *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, writes, Calvin's theology "is overwhelmingly a theology of the word," and for Calvin "the only successful medium of intercourse between God and the fallen world is the word."[199] T. F. Torrance argues that when Calvin speaks of living icons or images he means the word, "Where the thought is mirroring of God, properly speaking the mirror is always the Word."[200] William Bouwsma, in his biography of Calvin, writes, "Calvin suggests, at times, a bias against visual experience. He thought it impossible to give visual representation to the spiritual; neither God nor the human spirit can be painted, he observed…We must rise above 'what is revealed to our eyes.' The Christian depends on 'God's mouth': because 'mute visions are cold,' he always speaks to us, and faith begins when we listen to his voice."[201]

The preference of word over image is a false dichotomy. This effort to separate word and image is as old as Plato and extends through Hegel.[202] Trevor Hart quotes Colin Gunton as identifying these various forms of severing image from word as 'conceptual rationalism,' to which he means an "insistence 'that meaning and truth are successfully conveyed only by means of concepts of an intellectual kind which have been purified as completely as possible from all imaginative or pictorial content', resulting in an over-valuing of abstract logical connections between ideas, and a relative denigration of everything else.'"[203] For our purposes, part of the 'everything else' that has been denigrated is the imaginary poetics that enable pastors to apprehend the beauty of God, the God that is infinitely beyond the limits of our understanding.[204] In the first place, the

[199] Edward A Dowey, Jr, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 3, 13.
[200] Thomas F Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949) 37.
[201] William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 158.
[202] Trevor Hart, *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 28.
[203] Ibid., 28.
[204] Whether faith or science, argues Hart, "established patterns of language and conceptuality let us down…. In situations like these we are driven to acts of catachresis, bending and extending the natural

separation of image from word is undesirable, because it means that pastoral education (no longer catechesis) has focused on truth (doctrine) and goodness (ethics) at the exclusion of beauty. Consequently, pastors fail to cultivate desire and the means by which they come to engage the revealed glory of the Lord. Second, even if this effort to separate image and word was desirable, it is impossible to do so. The idea that one is able to disconnect image and word is an ancient and very stubborn myth.[205]

Whether Calvin intended it or not the path to Puritanism was firmly charted. It was uninterested and even distrustful of art, music, and culture. One unintended consequence was the so-called sacred world seceding enormous ground to the newly emerging secular and modern world. This secession led to one of the great ironies of Protestantism whereby Calvin's initial concern to maintain the total sovereignty and radical transcendence of God gave way to God as fundamentally immanent and limited.

It is true that images, as well as sounds, can and often do lead to idolatry. However, it is equally true that an aesthetic—meaning to do with the world rendered by the senses—disengagement with the world can lead to an unexercised and unconverted imagination that conceives a rather anemic, not to mention unbiblical, view of God—A view that more often than not resembles our fallen human image rather than the image of God revealed in Jesus Christ. One lesson learned is that the transcendence of God can be diminished as much by a dearth of image as it can by an overabundance. Images shape our conception of reality whether they are seen or unseen, whether they are carved out of stone or concepts lodged in the imagination.[206]

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range of teaching our old words new tricks in order to fill the gaps in the lexicon, and, by effectively adjusting or accommodating our language to the structures of the world in this way, granting ourselves enhanced epistemic access to it." Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 15.

[205] See Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: the Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[206] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Truth About God* (Nashville: Abindgon Press, 1999), 34-35.

The Reformers concern against 'graven images,' has led, in many instances to the avoidance of images assigned by the Bible.[207] Hart writes, "Yet the same Old Testament which at this defining moment of Israel's history urged the abandonment of material representations of God, elsewhere encourages and fuels an abundant and diverse poetic 'imaging' of him on more or less every page (as king, shepherd, warrior, rock, lion, strength and shield, light, and so on)."[208] As the possibility of God's transcendence is diminished, either through the surplus or absence of beauty, so too then the likelihood of idolatry increases. In the case of an image-less and beauty-less parish, which are not necessarily the same thing, the gathered community—its wants and desires— become the new and idolatrous face of the divine. As a consequence, the iconoclasm flowing out of the Reformation has led not to an end of idolatry but instead its proliferation.[209] The reality is that parishioners come into worship loaded with images, many which vie for their affections. In fact, they depend on these images to make meaning, sense, and purpose out of their life in the world, with one another, and with God. The pastor's concern is not simply to provide an uncluttered space that somehow automatically requires the congregation to check their tools for meaning making at the door. Rather, the pastor is to lead a people in through the font, by way of the proclaimed Word, to the Eucharistic meal. It is at the Eucharist that the day-to-day images that shape our understanding of truth, goodness and beauty are critiqued, redeemed, rejected, and revealed.[210]

Human fallen-ness coupled with the utter un-knowability of a transcendent God left the Reformers uncomfortable with the power of images, especially those created by human hands and even those poetic images found in Scripture. This,

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[207] Geoffrey Wainwright, "Christian Worship: Scriptural Basis and Theological Frame," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, eds. Wainwright and Westerfield Tucker, 1-4.
[208] Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 39.
[209] Interestingly enough, the early American and Puritan emphasis on word over image has lead to a Protestant church that is far from devoid of image. Absent of the classic symbols of faith the church has brokered new and equally powerful images. One expression of this turn is the uniquely American prosperity gospel that is being widely exported around the globe. For a thorough historical treatment see Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[210] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 197-208.

plus the human propensity towards idolatry—the domesticating of the God who brought Israel out of Egypt and raised Jesus Christ from the dead—resulted in the church's growing discomfort with beauty.[211] What began as a real and legitimate concern unfortunately ended in an impoverishment of the imagination, creating problems that strike at the heart of what it means for pastors to serve as under-shepherds to the Great Shepherd.

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The Possibilities of Re-enchantment

Fortunately, the re-enchantment of the parish is of increasing interest to both scholars and practitioners. There is a flurry of activity around matters related to beauty, theology, liturgy, imagination, and the arts. Hans Urs von Balthasar, as we will explore more fully in the next chapter, stands as one modern catalyst for reengagement with theological aesthetics in the Twentieth Century. More recently, Pope John Paul II wrote his *Letter to Artists* (1999) and Pope Benedict XVI had made beauty, art, and aesthetics a constant and resounding theme of his papacy.[213]

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[211] William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

[212] Interestingly enough, the early American and Puritan emphasis on word over image has lead to a Protestant church that is far from devoid of images. Absent of the classic symbols of the faith the church has brokered new and equally powerful images. One expression of this turn is the uniquely American prosperity gospel that is exported around the globe. This "flavor" of the faith is supported by several modern metaphors for ministry (e.g. "celebrity"). For a thorough historical treatment see Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[213] See D Vincent Twomey SVD and Jane E Rutherford, editors, *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture* (Dublin: Four Court Press, 2011). Numerous books, including the well-received *The Beauty of the Infinite* by the Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart, are finding their way to the bookshelves of both scholars and pastors. Additionally, Fuller Seminary's Brehm Center for Worship, Theology and the Arts, the University of St Andrews' Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts,

Earlier I suggested that a beauty-less parish is in part a result of misunderstanding the pastoral and theological concerns of the early Reformers, especially Calvin. As already noted, this misunderstanding led to an increasing iconoclasm that conceded, relevant to this discussion, the philosophy of aesthetics to an emerging post-Kantian world. As is evident by my use of the word "misunderstanding," it should be sufficiently clear that the ensuing iconoclasm of the Reformation overly simplified Calvin's understanding of the relationship between word and image. Therefore the recovery of beauty in and for the parish begins by recognizing that the Reformers never intended to jettison it in the first place. There is growing consensus among scholars that Calvin and his fellow Reformers struck a much more nuanced argument than originally given credit for. One such person is the aforementioned Randall Zachman:

> "Calvin, always had in mind, I would argue, that believers are to move from their faith in Christ back to the revelation of God the Creator because their faith in Christ now reveals to them who the Creator is and what that Creator is like. They now have the eyes to see what they beforehand could not see. Calvin says, 'Yet faith in Christ does not prevent us from applying our senses to the consideration of heaven and earth, that we may then seek confirmation in the true knowledge of God.' So Calvin was convinced that what we have come to know of God in Christ, we have confirmed by what we know of God in Creation."[214]

For Calvin, according to Zachman, the image and the word are interdependent. Faith in Christ is not Platonic in the sense that humans have graduated to the superior world of forms. Instead, faith in Christ brings a new kind of clarity to the revelation of God in creation. Calvin uses three striking images for creation. The first is when he identifies the creation as a mirror, "The world is rightly called the mirror of divinity. Believers, to whom God has given eyes to see, discern the sparks of his glory as it were shining out in every individual creature. The world

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Duke Divinity's Initiative in Theology and the Arts, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship are relatively new initiatives engaging, both as a matter of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, issues related theological aesthetics. Even popularly there is a renewed interest in beauty. Take as an example a recent article by Al Kennedy, "A Point of View: Why tyrants are afraid of art and beauty," *BBC*, 23 January 2015, accessed 4 February 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30939668.

[214] Randall C Zachman, "The beauty and terror of the universe: John Calvin and Blaise Pascal," in *Reconsidering John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 7.

was founded for this purpose, that it might be the theater of divine glory."[215] Creation serves to mirror the divine. As God illumines eyes to see, the world takes on reflective capacity, allowing humans to actually behold the glory of God. The second image is that of creation as a garment, "Therefore, as soon as the name of God sounds in our ears, or the thought of God occurs to our minds, let us also clothe God with this most beautiful ornament, the universe." Creation serves as the beautiful "ornament" fit for clothing God. The final image is of creation as a school, "Finally, let the world become our school if we rightly desire to know God."[216] What Calvin believes the world can teach us is not precisely spelled out. However, it can be assumed that he believes the world has something to teach us about God, creation, and our potential relationship to God within his created order. Calvin writes, "You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness."[217] This hardly sounds like an iconoclast. Belden Lane responds, "Calvin was as smitten by God's beauty as he was overwhelmed by God's power…Calvin conceived the world as a theater for the contemplation of divine beauty, with God assuming the central role at the heart of the action on stage."[218]

Throughout history, certain impulses of Platonism, heresies like Gnosticism, and periods of iconoclasm have caused Christianity to deny and devalue the embodied, material, and aesthetic reality of being human. From time to time the Church has needed to be reminded of the refrain from the Genesis 1, "And God saw it was good." For many the starting point has been the doctrine of creation, while for others it has been the doctrine of the Incarnation. More often than not these two doctrines are tied together, where the Incarnation serve as God's first and final "And God saw it was good." By way of the Incarnation God affirms the original goodness of creation. However, God in Jesus Christ does more than

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[215] Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews* 11:3.
[216] Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 23:7-8.
[217] John Calvin, *Institutes* (1539), I.11.
[218] Belden C Lane, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57-58.

affirm he also redeems. What is more, the Incarnation reminds us that God invites humanity into God's affirmation and redemption of the created world.[219] In light of a God who only affirms, the cross becomes the sign of a cruel and malevolent God. However, a God who redeems is one who can bend the deepest darkness into the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Mountains and valleys are reminders of the beauty God creates *ex nihilo*. The cross and empty tomb are reminders of the beauty God re-creates out of a world mired in sin and death. The loss of Cross and Creation as redemptively and affirmatively beautiful—not in a sentimentalized or romantic way—has left the church attempting to attract people to programs, buildings, promises of purpose filled lives, pastors' personalities, a deeper spirituality, and the moral formation of children. Furthermore, the church has forgotten that creation in light of the Cross of Christ has the potential beauty to call us to the greatest Good and Truth. Since Descartes and Kant the primary concern of philosophers and theologians has been epistemological, or that which is concerned with truth.[220] This has translated in to the North American Protestant church experience by way of a heavy emphasis on "Sunday School" for adults as well as children, reliance by both liberals and fundamentalist on modern epistemological tools (e.g. the scientific method), and the diminishment or disappearance of the Table and Fount, among other rituals and symbols of the faith.

"Unfortunately," as Edward T. Oakes writes, "to start with the question of truth means, as subsequent history would prove, never attaining it."[221] The church has been slow to realize this. It has invested incredible efforts in the pursuit of truth only to find its parishioners exhausted, disillusioned, confused or

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[219] Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 128-129.
[220] Edward T. Oakes, S. J., "The Apologetics of Beauty," *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 212. Theological education in North America, particularly among mainline Protestant institutions, is in many instances indistinguishable in its pedagogy, research methods, and objectives from the modern university. As elucidated earlier, the aim of theological education has largely been to establish a professional class that mirrors other fields of expertise. This means the main concerns and questions of the academic program have been epistemological.
[221] Ibid., 212.

disaffected. Fortunately, there are signs of the tide turning. Nearly every mainline denomination has been swept along by the liturgical renewal of post-Vatican II. Evangelicals are making their way, particularly young evangelicals, along the Canterbury Trail, or variations on a theme. It is quite telling that you would have a Reformed theologian from Calvin College write, "The mission of the Christian university should be conceived not just in terms of dissemination of *in*formation but also, and more fundamentally, as an exercise in *form*ation."[222]

Ironically, the primacy of epistemological concerns has meant that truth has lost its most potent apologetic. Drawing on Balthasar, Oakes writes, "We will never come to affirm the truth of revelation unless we first perceive it as beautiful."[223] This is one reason why beauty is indispensable to the church. Beauty is that which first convinces us of the truth. And second, even if truth is in view, without beauty it fails to act as the organizing center of life, for both individuals and communities of disciples. In other words, beauty allows us to affirm the truth of God's revelation while attracting us to doctrine in order that truth may move us to action of a particular kind. Again, Oakes writes:

> "Balthasar insisted that, in theological terms, we will never come to affirm the truth of revelation unless we first perceive it as beautiful. This perception of the beauty of revelation will then elicit a quasi-erotic response (since the beautiful is that which is inherently attractive), which response will pull us out of ourselves into lives of committed action, and finally, only in that action we will come to see how theology is thereby true."[224]

According to Balthasar, beauty is not only important as an apologetic for truth but ultimately results in the church's mission. Contrasting the Hellenic *kalon* and the Hebrew *kabod*, Oakes suggests:

> "Beauty and glory have in common this crucial feature: both are *enrapturing*. But the difference between them is also crucial: for the perception of the divine epiphany to Israel results in *mission*, another key term in Balthasar's theology, whereas Platonic beauty tends to terminate in static contemplation without further ado."[225]

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[222] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 4.
[223] Oakes, "The Apolgetics of Beauty," 212.
[224] Ibid., 212-213. In the next chapter we will look more closely at Balthasar's argument, particularly the interplay of beauty with truth and goodness.
[225] Ibid., 213.

It is in light of the church's "response already made" to revelation and mission that one can approach in faith the logic of the Triune God's story and his pattern of redemption for the cosmos.[226] Created beauty has a logic that not only reveals God but causes us to desire God.[227] Drawing on Aquinas and Balthasar, David Taylor writes:

> "When we encounter beauty, we encounter it as a kind of desire-filled epiphany that pulls us into the object of beauty as an act of *eros* where we simultaneously lay hold of and are laid hold of by the beautiful object; that pulls us up towards the Source of all beauty as an act of contemplation; that pulls us outside of ourselves as an act of ecstasy; and that pulls us out towards an other as an *agapic* act where we enjoy the other for its own sake. This kind of encounter with created beauty would serve, in turn, to counter dysfunctional tendencies: namely to escape beyond the object of beauty and so to leave it behind as if the object were no longer "needful"; to escape into ourselves narcissistically and so to protect ourselves over against the presence of others; to escape into the object of beauty and so falsely to lose ourselves; and, finally, to escape from others and so to use them instead of to love the."[228]

An essential aspect of beauty for the church is the role it plays in 'apprenticing' people in the faith. In this sense, beauty does more than "download" content to the disciple; rather, beauty plays a catechizing role—shaping heart, mind, strength and soul to desire that which is the Truth and the Good.

The persuasiveness of beauty rests in the doctrine of creation and eschatology.[229] Beauty is important to the church because it speaks as to how the world was ordered to be and how the world will be in light of God's ongoing activity in history, climaxing in Christ's decisive victory on the cross. Karl Barth illustrates this in his well known reference to Mozart:

> "I must again revert to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Why is it that this man is so incomparable? Why is it that for the receptive, he has produced in almost every bar he conceived and composed a type of music for which 'beautiful' is not a fitting epithet: music which for the true Christian is not mere entertainment, enjoyment or edification but food and drink; music full of comfort and counsel for his needs; music which is never a slave to its technique nor sentimental but

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[226] Ibid., 213.
[227] As I talk about "logic," I am thinking specifically of Aquinas' definition of beauty introduced earlier: Beauty is marked by proportion, wholeness, and results then in splendor or radiance.
[228] W. David O. Taylor, "Spirit and Beauty: A Reappraisal," *Christian Scholar's Review* XLIV:1 (Fall 2014): 50.
[229] Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2007), 186-187.

> always 'moving,' free and liberating because wise, strong and sovereign? Why is it possible to hold that Mozart has a place in theology, especially in the doctrine of creation and also in eschatology, although he was not a father of the Church, does not seem to have been a particularly active Christian, and was a Roman Catholic, apparently leading what might appear to us a rather frivolous existence when not occupied in his work? It is possible to give him this position because he knew something about creation in its total goodness that neither the real fathers of the Church nor our Reformers, neither the Orthodox or the liberals, neither the exponents of natural theology nor those heavily armed with the 'Word of God,' and certainly not the Existentialists, nor indeed any other great musicians before and after him, either know or can express and maintain as he did. In this respect he was pure in heart, far transcending both optimists and pessimists. 1756-1791! This was the time when God was under attack for the Lisbon earthquake, and theologians and other well-meaning folk were hard put to it to defend Him. In face of the problem of theodicy, Mozart had the peace of God which far transcends all the critical speculative reason that praises and reproves. This problem lay behind him."[230]

What is beauty's efficacy in light of beauty's agent (e.g. Mozart) being less than pious, and given the reality of great evil in the world (e.g. the Lisbon earthquake)? Barth answers that beauty's power rest in its resonance with the primordial and teleological end of God's creation. The power of Mozart's music is that it harmonically reverberates with "creation's total goodness," that goodness which the Creator pronounced over the cosmos from the beginning pages of Genesis. In this sense beauty is our first and most compelling introduction to both creation's purpose and meaning. In other words, beauty speaks to the truth and goodness of creation. Beauty is the entry point for epistemology and ethics.[231] Jeremy Begbie links questions of truth ("What kind of cosmos does the Creator create and relate to?") and goodness ("What kind of calling do we have in this cosmos?") to the prior question of "what kind of Creator creates?"[232] The Christian tradition has answered this question with a Trinitarian God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Triune God created the world *ex nihilo* out of love and with power. This means, among other things, that any conversation about beauty ultimately concerns and is rooted in the nature and character of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Patrick Sherry writes, "Divine Beauty is

[230] Karl Barth, *God and Nothingness*. CD Volume III, 3 (48-51).
[231] Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 187-209.
[232] Ibid., 187.

to be explained in Trinitarian terms, for the Father's glory is reflected in the Son, his perfect image, and diffused through the Holy Spirit; that the Spirit has the mission of communicating God's beauty to the world, both through Creation, in the case of natural beauty, and through inspiration, in that of artistic beauty."[233] This means that a world and a church without beauty is a world without God.[234] Furthermore, absent of beauty, the church faces an impoverishment of both truth and goodness, which threatens the worship and witness of the church, the two purposes for which it exists.[235] It is no wonder then that Pope Benedict the XVI implored artists to help the church in its mission:

> "We need your collaboration in order to carry out our ministry, which consists, as you know, in preaching and rendering accessible and comprehensible to the minds and hearts of our people the things of the spirit, the invisible, the ineffable, the things of God himself."[236]

Ultimately the recovery of beauty in and for the parish is a matter of Christology, "or the things of God himself." The Divine Word, after all, images himself into the Father's created order. John Milbank helpfully writes:

> "Only Christ can provide an image of His own face. Only God can make a representation of God. The making is a begetting—in that the Son is the one who is begotten of the unbegotten. God's making is an extension, or procession, of God's self…Put another way, the beauty of Christ makes manifest His own watermark within creation, since by Him and through Him all things were, are, and continue to be. What is re-cognized in the beautiful, as the beautiful, is the paradisial—creation is re-cognized in terms of its Christic orientation and perfection."[237]

Milbank offers this helpful metaphor of Christ as the watermark of creation; in other words, that faint design imprinted on paper that when held up to the light identifies the maker. God uses creation in order to reveal the Son. It is in and through the beauty of Christ that the world is fully and finally beautiful, becoming overwhelming evidence for the goodness and truth of the Triune God. However,

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[233] Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 160.
[234] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 19. This thought will be developed more fully in the next chapter.
[235] See Scott Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).
[236] St Benedict XVI, "Meeting with the Artists," Address at the Sistine Chapel (November 21, 2008).
[237] John Milbank, "The Beauty of God," in *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*, ed. John Milbank et al. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 42-43.

beauty does more than reveal Truth and Goodness. Beauty has the power to draw creation into communion with its Creator. And it is the pastor's task to make arrangements for her flock to encounter a Beauty that has sought our company at such incomprehensible costs.

II. Why Beauty Matters for the Pastor

Near the beginning of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserables*, we are introduced to the aged and kindly Bishop M. Charles-Francois-Bienvenu Myriel. Father Myriel is tending his small garden, as he does most everyday, when his housekeeper, Madame Magloiri, questions the utility and value of cultivating flowers rather than vegetables. Given Father Myriel's apparent asceticism—for example, he vacated the finery of the bishop's palace in exchange for the cramped old hospital, giving the infirmed a far better place to convalesce or die—his response seems somewhat surprising:

> "Monseigneur, you believe in making use of everything, but this fourth plot is wasted. Salads are more useful than flowers."
>
> "'You are wrong,' replied the bishop. 'The beautiful is as useful as the useful.' Then, after a pause, he added: 'More so, perhaps.'"[238]

Bishop Myriel, he whose clothes are threadbare, whose meals are meager, and whose coffers are emptied for the poor, makes an unlikely, but for that reason all the more convincing, advocate for beauty. Betraying a pre-modern disposition, Bishop Myriel hints that beauty is useful but not *merely* useful. On the other hand, Madame Magloire embodies much of modernity's sentiment towards beauty: An ornament of vanity where only elites and aristocrats have the time or resources to be concerned. Beauty is something for the privileged and educated, its taste are defined in the concert halls of London, the museums of Paris, and the fashion houses of Milan. As ornament, beauty is reduced to diversion from the really important matters of life and death. The bourgeois become interested in beauty as a testament to their newly emerging social status and purchasing power. This is one reason, as Abraham Kuyper recognized, that art "is so broadly on the rise in our time," and that artistic pursuits are tending to "gain ground among the broader middle classes."[239] In light of this democratization,

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[238] Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, trans. Norman Denny (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 38.
[239] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 142. The Stone Lectures of 1898.

beauty becomes the middle-classes' ornamental evidence of the proverbial "good life," rather than the essence of *zoë* life (John 20:31).

In a world without beauty it appears either foolish or overly romantic to consider beauty as a serious topic of discussion. Hans Urs von Balthasar writes, "We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it.[240] In Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin is considered the fool because he believes beauty does matter. The Prince has arrived in St Petersburg after four years in a Swiss clinic treating his idiocy and epilepsy. At a late night party, the bleary-eyed Hippolyte poses this now famous question to the Prince:

> "Is it true, Prince, that you once said 'beauty would save the world? Gentlemen,' he cried loudly to them all, 'the Prince insists that beauty will save the world! And I insist that he has such playful thoughts because he's in love now. Gentlemen, the prince is in love; as soon as he came in today, I was convinced of it. Don't blush, Prince, or I'll feel sorry for you…Are you a zealous Christian? Kolya says you call yourself a Christian."[241]

Throughout the novel Prince Myshkin's detractors meet him with derision and disbelief, but never so much as in the passage above. Only an idiot, of whom Prince Myshkin serves as the archetype, as the Christ-like figure, would make such outlandish claims about beauty's central role in redeeming the world, in shaping culture, and in meaning making. The only explanation for the Prince's idiocy, given by Hippolyte, is that he must be either in love, or worse, a Christian.

In the last century, beauty has had some unlikely, if but a few, champions. For example, at the end of May, 1944, a few short days before the Allied invasion of northern Europe, General Dwight Eisenhower issued this order:

> "Shortly we will be fighting our way across the Continent of Europe in battles designed to preserve our civilization. Inevitably, in the path of our advance will be found historical monuments and cultural centers which symbolize to the world

[240] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 18.
[241] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 2003), 382.

> all that we are fighting to preserve. It is the responsibility of every commander to protect and respect these symbols whenever possible."[242]

Eisenhower, a painter himself, was a rare voice, outside of the art community, articulating the importance of beautiful things in meaning making. He believed, if unable or unwilling to fully articulate, that beauty does matter. Another unlikely defense of beauty comes more recently. On January 24, 2014 the original Mac computer, Apple's iconic personal computer, turned thirty years old. In a National Public Radio (NPR) interview, Steve Henn spoke with current Apple CEO Tim Cook and designer Bud Tribble. Both Cook and Tribble have been with Apple from the very beginning:

> HENN: For a company that says it doesn't look back, Apple still draws lots of lessons from the development of that first Mac. For example, Tribble says Steve Jobs insisted that the Mac be more than just a machine – he wanted it to be a work of art.
> TRIBBLE: Artifacts in our lives should be beautiful, they're part of the warp and woof of our life.
> HENN: The team took a field trip to a Tiffany's factory in New York. Jobs once suggested redesigning a circuit board for aesthetic purposes only. And when the Mac finally shipped, every member of the team had their signature embossed on the inside.
> TRIBBLE: That's a theme in my time with Apple and with Steve – that's an underlying current that is – was strong back then and if anything is even stronger now.
> HENN: And 30 years ago, as a final reward for the folks who created the Mac, Steve Jobs bought the team a beautiful black Bosendorfer grand piano. That piano is still at Apple – a reminder that a technically brilliant instrument could also be beautiful – and a pleasure to touch and play.
> COOK: Technology by itself is nothing.[243]

Steve Jobs assembled an initial design team that included computer scientist as well as archeologists, artists, and social scientist. They thought about design, about aesthetics and beauty. They even signed their names to the first computer as if it were a work of fine art.

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[242] Dwight D. Eisenhower, quoted by Robert M. Edsel, *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (New York City: Center Street, 2009), 63. The full order can be found in the *Report of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas*, 68.

[243] Tim Cook and Bud Tribble, interview by Steve Henn, "At 30, The Original Mac is Still an Archetype of Innovation," *All Tech Considered*, NPR, January 24, 2014, http://www.npr.org/templates/transcripts/transcripts.php?storyId=265238567.

General Eisenhower and the Mac Computer make for odd apologists. Nevertheless, they intuit something that wide swaths of North American Christianity have too often forgotten. In the long shadow of Industrialization and a bloody twentieth century, acknowledging that the world needs beauty has been made to seem frivolous. And in the unlikely case where beauty has been spoken for, the rationale behind that need is often weak or left unarticulated. For philosophy and even theology have, with few exceptions in the West, made the topic of aesthetics an afterthought. This omission has made a real and lasting impact on the West. D. H. Lawrence once wrote:

> "The real tragedy of England, as I see it, is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely: the man-made England is so vile…now though perhaps nobody knew it, it was ugliness which betrayed the spirit of man, in the nineteenth century. The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness: meanness and formless and ugly surroundings: ugly ideals, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationship between workers and employers. The human soul needs *actual* beauty even more than bread."[244]

Beauty does matter, more so even than bread, unless, of course, the bread is from heaven. In Mark 9, the bread of heaven is transformed into the light of the world. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John high up on the mountain. Suddenly, Jesus is transfigured before the disciples, and "his cloths became radiant, intensely white" (9:3).[245] Jesus shines with the *shekinah* glory of the Lord. The fullness of Jesus' divinity is manifested as the cloud forms overhead, out of which, a voice from heaven cries out, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (9:7). It is the occasion of Jesus' transfiguration—the manifestation of divine beauty—that reveals to the disciples, and to the world, both Truth ("This is my Son") and Goodness ("listen to him"). The human soul needs beauty. It is the beauty of the Incarnate Son that leads the world to Truth and Goodness—to Being itself. If anyone should believe it were so—convinced of beauty's necessary role in meaning making—it should be the church and not a four star general or a technology firm. And so we turn now to look at why beauty does

[244] D. H. Lawrence, "Nottingham and the Mining Country" (1929). Emphasis added.
[245] Cranfield links this pericope to the renewal of the covenant on Mt. Sinai, Exodus 34. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press, 1959), 290-292.

matter for the life of the pastor. This then sets the stage to talk more specifically about why beauty matters for the faithful formation of pastoral identity, and eventually why beauty matters in forming an understanding of ministry as gift.

The Glory of the Lord

What if, as Prince Myshkin believed, beauty really will save the world? What if, as Bishop Myriel suggested, beauty truly is more useful than the useful? What if the seemingly ridiculous is actually sensible? Is Tim Cook speaking in hyperbole when he says, "Technology by itself is nothing?" If this is true, then does this mean life without beauty is also nothing? If Myshkin, Myriel, and Cook are correct, then beauty demands far more careful attention than the world and even the church have been willing to give.

Arguably, not since Jonathan Edwards has a Christian theologian of the West taken beauty as seriously as the Swiss theologian and priest, Hans Urs von Balthasar. "Beauty is," writes Balthasar, "the blazing forth of the primal, protological and eschatological splendour of creation even in this age of death, in which redeemed man is admitted to participation in God's act of praising himself in his creation."[246] Beauty is the key to God's fundamental purpose and concluding end of humanity and creation. For Balthasar, beauty had been taken captive by the eye of every beholder and reduced to a this-world only aesthetic, all with threatening consequences to goodness and truth.[247] In order for the world to reengage beauty it must consider it something, a "form," external to one's self.[248] Balthasar writes, "What is a person without a life-form, that is to say without a form which he has chosen for his life, a form into which and through which to pour out his life, so that his life becomes the soul of the form

[246] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord,* 66-67.
[247] Ibid., 19.
[248] Aidan Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2011). Nichols writes, "Balthasar, however, puts the human subject—and that by virtue of its created nature—in immediate relation with the truth that lies outside itself." Stephen Wigley in his book *Balthasar's Trilogy* (London: T & T Clark, 2010) has informed much of my thinking along the lines of *form*.

and the form becomes the expression of his soul?"[249] In modernity, rival forms have multiplied exponentially. The Christian, on the other hand, comes to realize that fullness of life is possible "only if he truly becomes this form which has been willed and instituted by Christ."[250] What Balthasar labeled "this age of death" made the western world wonder if choosing the form of true beauty, if it existed at all, was a possibility, a fleeting ideal of a bygone era, or a cruel construction of Romanticism. For Balthasar, beauty matters not as entertainment or diversion but as the primordial and teleological key to history. It goes without saying, that the pastoral task is largely about seeing, assuming, and announcing the form of divine revelation that alone has the power to shatter ugliness.

Richard Lischer recounts his time many years ago as a seminary intern at a large Lutheran congregation. One morning the pastor invited Lischer in to his office and asked him to officiate a funeral that afternoon. Lischer confesses, "This made me uneasy. Apparently, I had skipped the class in which we learned how to bury people. And I told him I didn't know how."[251] The pastor walked Lischer over to the fellowship hall, and like a coach drawing up a play, took a piece of chalk and drew the outline of a grave on the linoleum floor. The pastor instructed Lischer on how to act, what to say, and where to stand. Then, at the last, the pastor took out a "mysterious vile," and handing it to Lischer said, "These are the ashes. When you come to the committal, pour these at the head of the casket and say, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' And one more thing: don't be sloppy. Make sure you make the sign of the cross with the ashes." Taken aback, Lischer remembers thinking, "'Why not be sloppy with the ashes? That's what death is all about, isn't it? A chaotic reunion with the soil, which itself is a chaos of comingled organisms on a planet named Earth.' But in Christ, even the chaos of ashes finds a form."[252] The pastor's task is to cultivate attentiveness, both for himself and his congregation, to the scandalous and unlikely beauty that

[249] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 24.
[250] Ibid., 28.
[251] Richard Lischer, "The shape of ashes: Repentance and the cross," *The Christian Century* 132 (2015).
[252] Ibid.

is the life-giving form of the cross of Christ, something modern metaphors for ministry are ill suited for. It is this form through which God is able to accomplish his re-formation of creation. Quoting Balthasar, Stephen Wigley writes:

> It is through contemplation of the Incarnation that the particular form of God's beauty is perceived and this carries through to the contemplation of the cross; 'If we seek Christ's beauty in a glory which is not that of the Crucified, we are doomed to seek in vain.' 'In this self-revelation, God's beauty embraces death as well as life, fear as well as joy, what we call "ugly" as well as what we call "beautiful."'[253]

Pastors, of all people, ought to understand that "to be a Christian is precisely a form. How could it be otherwise since being a Christian is a grace, a possibility of existence opened up by God's act of justification, by the God-Man's act of redemption?"[254] Indeed, how could it be otherwise? How could it be that pastors have lost or left uncultivated the ability to behold the form of God made flesh?

Beauty matters because it graciously invites us to share in the form that initiates and brings to completion salvation-history.[255] To deny this invitation is to deny life—both as a denial of life's logic and a refusal to participate in life's drama. Balthasar recognized the danger of a world without beauty, largely because he was living in just such a world. Balthasar writes:

> "In a world without beauty—even if people cannot dispense with the word and constantly have it on the tip of their tongues in order to abuse it—in a world which is perhaps not wholly without beauty, but which can no longer see it or reckon with it: in such a world the good also loses its attractiveness, the self-evidence of why it must be carried out."[256]

As Balthasar acknowledges, beauty is far from absent in popular discourse. For starters, it helps us make sense, to a diminishing degree, of the way the world

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[253] Wigley, *Balthasar's Trilogy*, 30. Wigley mentions that it is Barth who begins to recover the idea that beauty finds its definition within the glory of the Lord. One of Balthasar's contributions is to ask what relationship exists between the beauty of creation and theological beauty. For the pastor, and for this discussion, it is perhaps Barth who represents a first step and Balthasar who represents a further challenge to the pastor's ability to recover the ability to apprehend the beauty of God. This is not to say these "steps" are somehow linear or sequential, but rather interrelated. The goal of this project is not to settle the dispute between Barth and Balthasar, but rather to point out that pastors are ill equipped to see beauty to begin with. The further question, tackled in the third section of this project, is to ask how then does the pastor begin to recover the ability to apprehend beauty.

[254] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 28

[255] Ibid., 29.

[256] Ibid., 19.

works or is constituted. Secondly, beauty is used to manipulate, cajole, and construct each new fleeting understanding of ultimate reality. In this light, it could be claimed that ours is a beauty-obsessed world. We are bombarded by images on TV. We wade through a jungle of magazines in the check-out line at the grocery. The so-called fitness centers or gyms are nearly as ubiquitous in suburban America as are fast food restaurants, a curious combination indeed.

Balthasar understands beauty as a transcendental. For Balthasar, "transcendental" simply means a universal that is beyond any particular category.[257] Transcendentals constitute and express the grounds of ultimate reality. A common way to talk about transcendentals is to say that they are "convertible with being" and with one another.[258] The earliest transcendentals included "unity," "truth," and "goodness." Before modernity, Western thinkers assumed transcendentals' epistemic objectivity, "and thus their discussion of transcendentals proceeds as a frankly metaphysical treatment of being and its properties precisely as being."[259] It was medieval scholasticism that would formally introduce "beauty" as a transcendental.[260] And so it is the true, the good, and the beautiful on which Balthasar bases his massive multi-volume trilogy.[261] Goodness has to do with ethics while truth has to do with faith. Beauty is then the transcendental that substantiates the true and the good. It is not that truth is not true and goodness is not good without beauty; rather, without beauty, the true and the good are not seen, sought after, or experienced as such.

To contemplate beauty is to contemplate divine love. For Balthasar, Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection are the focus of that contemplation. The

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[257] Aidan Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2011), 1.
[258] Mary Collins, Joseph Komonchak, and Dermot Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 1043.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] *The Glory of the Lord* (Beauty), *Theo-Drama* (Goodness), and *Theologic* (Truth). As mentioned elsewhere, the very architecture of Balthasar's work is a critique of Kant's treatment of the transcendentals. For Balthasar, the transcendentals are not simply characteristics that we attribute to Being based on Kant's notion of universal subjectivity, but are actual "convertible" properties of Being.

"supreme object" of consideration is "the form of divine revelation in salvation-history, leading to Christ and deriving from him."[262] It is through Jesus that the beauty of God becomes known, "Christ becomes the image that reveals the invisible God."[263] Christ is the full revelation of God's glory. Therefore, Christ is the revelation of Being. God's communication of the God-man flows from the life of the Trinity. That divine love (*agape*) is communicated to creation. In turn, the person enraptured by and caught up in the revelation of the God-man, returns that love (*eros*). Balthasar writes:

> In the face of the Cross, love is sobered to its very marrow before God's *agape*, which clothes itself in the language of the body; and, in the face of this intoxicating language of flesh and blood that gives itself by being poured out, love is lifted above itself and elevated into the eternal, in order there, as creaturely *eros*, to be the tent and dwelling place of the divine love! Love is dispossessed in order to become the expression of something higher. What is involved is a double, reciprocal dispossession: of God into the human form and of man into the divine form, and this double dispossession contains the most concrete life: the life of man, which attains its form by letting itself be shattered to become the form of God; the life of God, that gains man for itself by renouncing its own form and, obedient unto death, pouring itself into the form of existence unto death.[264]

Christ is the image of God's glory, his divine love. The form of divine love, fully revealed in Christ, can be seen, heard, and touched. Jesus is that which can "captivate" and "transport…casting a person down to adoration and transforming him into a believer and a follower."[265] Put another way, Jesus is the object and end of true desire. Balthasar talks about this communication of beauty in the form of Jesus as a "shattering." Aidan Nichols comments, "If the God of glory wished to show his beauty to the world in his incarnate Image he must at once take up forms within the world and shatter them so as to express the Glory beyond beauty."[266]

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[262] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 29.
[263] Ibid., 32.
[264] Ibid., 654.
[265] Ibid., 32.
[266] Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: Introduction to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), xix.

The Incarnate Word, as the revelation of divine glory, makes known truth and goodness by shattering the word's ultimate categories. Beauty has the potential to order our desires rightly. Without beauty, creation fails to live and think rightly. The human response to the shattering beauty of God is love (*eros*). For Balthasar, recovery of beauty leads to a much-needed restoration of *eros* to the theological discourse; thus, restoring the potential for truth and goodness to return to form. Absent the form of divine beauty, modern man has been able to maintain the illusion of his autonomy. In a world that privileges rationality and radical independence, susceptibility to beauty's pull ranges from harmless frivolity to dangerous seduction. In modernity, vulnerability to beauty's charms often signals a weakness of character. In contrast, the broad Christian tradition, claims Balthasar, would not disagree with modernity's anxiety, except when beauty is grounded in and defined by ultimate Being, the form of which is revealed in Jesus Christ; then, the attractive power of beauty becomes not only tolerable but essential. It is beauty, communicated as divine love which comes near to us, draws us up to God, and takes us in to the divine being. The end of human life is to see (vision) and be taken up (enraptured) into fellowship and communion with God, to participate in the glory of the Triune God.[267] In Balthasar, one hears an echo of Athanasius, "God became man so that man might become God."[268] When the object of embrace is the Triune God, beauty becomes the pathway to a wholly and rightly transformed life. Conversely, in a world without beauty the possibility to be drawn more intimately into the life of the Trinity is diminished. Moreover, the possibility of remaining rooted in the true and the good is fleeting. Put another way, in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, "There are pleasures that are able to save people."[269] And, in the wisdom of the Church, that pleasure is the beauty of God made manifest in creation and history through the Incarnation. The intensifying desire to experience this saving pleasure is what draws us back to the true and the good. This pleasure will not be

[267] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 122.
[268] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr, Popular Patristic Series (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 54:3.
[269] Daniel Robison, trans., *The Shepherd of Hermas* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), III.vi.5, 49.

experienced in "splendid isolation" from the ordinary of God's world.[270] For, as Balthasar says, "The same Christian centuries which masterfully knew how to read the natural world's language of forms were the very same ones which possessed eyes trained, first, to perceive the formal quality of revelation by the aid of grace and its illumination and second (and only then!) to interpret revelation."[271] Creation, perfected in the Incarnation, becomes an expression of the "Uncreated Reality."[272] Therefore, creation is the context of this saving pleasure, if not its ultimate source. And this is why pastors need to be formed in such a way so as to apprehend beauty, making provisions, as best as he can, for his flock to encounter God made fully human. Beauty matters because it reveals the only credible love—the love that takes the form of man and shatters our categories of truth, goodness, and beauty.[273] Beauty returns truth and goodness to Being.

As stated above, beauty rightly orders desire, which leads to Balthasar's second point, "Man stands before the good and asks himself why *it* must be done and not rather its alternative, evil. For this, too, is a possibility, and even the more exciting one: Why not investigate Satan's depths?"[274] If beauty, as a transcendental, is lost then goodness loses its attractiveness while wickedness gains a certain rationality and legitimacy. In fact, beauty plays an essential role in revealing that there is a right and wrong way to make our way through the world. This connection between ethics and aesthetics is one of Balthasar's more startling claims. James Fodor writes:

> "In the current intellectual climate of the West, ethics and aesthetics are seen to be related—if they are related at all—only externally. No intrinsic, organic connection is countenanced between them. Concepts of imagination and morality are likewise infrequently, if ever, linked—and the rare cases that they

[270] Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1998), 4.
[271] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 29.
[272] Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 4.
[273] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, trans. D. C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004). Published in German, 1963, *Ghubhaft ist nur Liebe*.
[274] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 19.

> are the aesthetic dimension is relegated to a narrowly-circumscribed, ancillary role of supplying either moral motivation or illustration."[275]

For Balthasar, our vision determines our actions; seeing determines our being and doing. Vision shapes ethics. Stanley Hauerwas writes, "The central aim of the Christian life is not so much a matter of right action…[as it is a matter of]…a truthful vision of God."[276] Action then, proceeds from seeing. Therefore, the ability to behold the beauty of God is of supreme importance. However, this ability to apprehend beauty, before it is ever a work of our own, is a gift of God. The attributes of God's Triune life overflow into his creation and find their climax—infinite beginning and end—in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is the vision of Jesus Christ that amplifies and clarifies the reflected glory and beauty of God throughout creation history. David Bentley Hart writes, "Christian morality is a labor of vision – to see the forms of Christ, to see all creation as having been recapitulated in him, and to see in all other persons the possibility of discerning and adoring Christ's form in a new fashion."[277] Rightly viewed, God's glory apprehended, first as gift, moves the church to become a more true and realized outpost of the Kingdom of God. Oddly sounding to Western Protestant ears, our missional and moral compass is misplaced not primarily due to some faulty didactic pedagogy but rather to a weakening, or possibly misuse or underuse, of the senses. James Smith's compelling criticism is that the modern (North American and Protestant) Christian church is too "idea-centric" or "belief-centrict."[278] The emphasis is more on constructing a worldview than inviting people into worship. The result is a church that is informative rather than formative. The former takes hold of the mind whereas the latter aims for the heart. The irony, for Smith, is that the so-called "secular" has used the power of liturgics to win converts while the church is busy constructing a worldview that

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[275] James Fodor, 'Alien Beauty: Parabolic Judgment and the Witness of Faith,' in *Theological Aesthetics After Von Balthasar*, eds. Oleg V Bychkov and James Fodor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 190.
[276] Stanley Hauerwas, 'The Significance of Vision: Toward an Aesthetic Ethic' in *Vision and Virture: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974, 1981) 31.
[277] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 342.
[278] See James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2009).

fails to shape desire. In other words, the church has lost the power of worship/liturgics to capture hearts. Smith writes:

> "Liturgies—whether 'sacred' or 'secular'—shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world. In short, liturgies make us certain kinds of people, and what defines us is what we love. They do this because *we are the sorts of animals whose orientation to the world is shaped from the body up more than from the head down*."[279]

Goodness—moral formation—is not tied to some system of situational ethics but is instead shaped by the beauty that holds our gaze.[280] Hart plainly states, "Ethics is an aesthetics: an optics, that is, in an unequivocal sense, an order of seeing that obeys a *story* of being according to which the other is delineated with the radiant proportions of the other, who elicits the infinite regard of God and compels an infinite awe and even love from the one who looks on."[281] Hart goes on to explain that this 'awe' is a dawning recognition of God's beauty as infinitely other. Hauerwas adds that the moral life is "better understood on the analogy of the aesthetic mode of seeing and beholding than in terms of discrete actions and decisions. For the right answer [when it comes to moral questions] is mainly a matter of really looking while avoiding the constant temptation to return to the self with the deceitful consolation of self-pity, resentment, fantasy, and despair."[282] As Hauerwas intimates, modern man is intensely focused on himself, and this is evidenced even in the way the church has come to think about goodness, "Christian ethics has succumbed to modern man's one-sided understanding of himself as actor and self-creator,"[283] hence the pastor's pressure to assume metaphors for ministry that help parishioners narrate a spiritualized version of their own heroic story. Culturally, this is a quasi-religious form of self-beatification, and an often-expensive process at that.[284] There are self-help

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[279] Ibid., 24. Emphasis added.
[280] Stanley Hauerwas, "Situation Ethics, Moral Notions, and Moral Theology," in *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 12-13.
[281] Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 343.
[282] Hauerwas, 'The Significance of Vision,' 37-38.
[283] Ibid., 30.
[284] Heather Havrilesky insightfully brings to light the religious nature of American's obsession with extreme sports in her article "Why Are American's So Fascinated With Extreme Fitness," *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 2014, accessed February 23, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/magazine/why-are-

books, life-coaches, personal trainers, plastic surgeons, a wide variety of mental health professionals, specialized and so-called health food stores, organic this and that, spiritual gurus, and the latest celebrity spirituality. Billion dollar industries help us pay supreme attention to ourselves—to make ourselves better, more beautiful, more attractive. This self-beatification is frenetic and desperate, and renders Hauerwas' quote above prophetic. Unfortunately, pastors, rather than helping people realize the futility of such pursuits, prove to be complicit with their topical sermons, professional specializations, and buffet of programs for every stage and age. We fail, as Hauerwas says, to remember "that the measure of moral goodness ultimately lies outside ourselves."[285] This is another way of saying with Balthasar that the form of beauty is something that we receive rather than what we project or even construct. Or, as Aidan Nichols writes, "Reality is more fundamentally a gift than it is a construction by us."[286]

It is towards a vision of the beautiful to which the pastor is called to train the gaze of her flock. Ultimately, apprehending the beauty of God shapes not only what we do but also who we are. As Hauerwas puts it, the Christian moral task is "to become what we see."[287] Or as Josef Pieper writes, "Virtue does not mean being 'nice' and 'proper' in an isolated act or omission. Virtue means: man's being 'is' right, and this in the supernatural and natural sense."[288] Pastors need to be about the business of restoring, in Jesus' name, sight to the blind, of recapturing the profound word of exhortation in the simple children's rhyme, "O be careful little eyes what you see."

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americans-so-fascinated-with-extreme-fitness.html. Havrilesky writes, "CrossFitters represent just one wave of a fitness sea change, in which well-to-do Americans abandon easy, convenient forms of exercise in favor of workouts grueling enough to resemble a kind of physical atonement….It makes sense that for those segments of humanity who aren't fighting for survival every day of their lives, the new definition of fulfillment is feeling as if you're about to die….For the privileged, maybe the most grueling path seems the most likely to lead to divinity. When I run on Sunday mornings, I pass seven packed, bustling fitness boutiques, and five nearly empty churches."

[285] Ibid., 31.

[286] Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar*, 5.

[287] Fodor, 193. Hauerwas, 'The Significance of Vision,' 46.

[288] Josef Pieper, *Josef Pieper: An Anthology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 5.

In a world without beauty not only does goodness lose its attractiveness but so also does truth. Balthasar writes,

> "In a world that no longer has enough confidence in itself to affirm the beautiful, the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency. In other words, syllogisms may still dutifully clatter away like rotary presses of computers which answers is itself a mechanism which no longer captivates anyone."[289]

As Balthasar acknowledges, we live in a curious time when the basis for much of what we regard as true has eroded, and yet, functionally we continue to operate as if those truths still exist. Consequently, the basis and logic for economics, human rights, politics, social welfare, and education, among other things, is finding itself on tenuous footing. As Balthasar says, "The conclusions are no longer conclusive."[290] Take as an example, from the art world, the paintings of Rembrandt, "Rembrandt finally turned his back on the glorification of man which had become the classical ideal, and which reached its zenith in Baroque art…He realized that beauty must serve something higher, namely truth, or else it is in danger of becoming an empty shell."[291] When beauty is dislodged from truth it becomes characterized by the prevailing winds of its time. In some ages there is a dominant theme that narrates beauty. In other times, such as ours, beauty is caught running from one narrative to the next.

If in beauty's absence goodness loses its attractiveness and truth loses its cogency, then what ultimately, asks Balthasar, happens to Being, "And if this is how the transcendental fare because one of them has been banished, what will happen with Being itself?"[292] The final problem, in a world where beauty is absent or does not matter, is the death or demotion of God. In just such a world, the pastor—the one who is called as under shepherd to the Good Shepherd—is faced with a great existential crisis. Pastoral identity is plunged into despair, causing clergy to reach for metaphors for ministry that validate their existence even if God is reduced to a comforting thought. The modern pastor's struggle is

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[289] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 19.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Willem Adolph Visser't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, trans. K. Gregor Smith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 13.
[292] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 19.

not one of persecution, doubt, budgets, attendance, or buildings, but is the banishment of beauty, the lost ability to apprehend the glory of God, and a diminished capacity, as Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9 in the parable of the sower, to see and hear, "You will indeed hear but never understand, you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes that have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them" (Matthew 13:14-15, ESV).

The current religious climate in North America, as stated earlier, parses doctrine and ethics ad nauseam. Upper judicatories, especially among mainline Protestants, are constantly splitting hairs with regards to doctrine and ethics, but to no end. Beauty must precede and infuse truth and goodness. Joseph Ratzinger comments on the architecture of Balthasar's trilogy, "Many details of it have entered into current theological scholarship, although his fundamental approach, which is actually the essential element of the whole work, has not been widely accepted."[293] The order of Bathasar's great trilogy is intentional. It is no accident that he begins with aesthetics followed by his Theo-Drama and Theo-Logic. This is by no means an argument against a deeply robust theological engagement; rather, it is an admission that knowledge based solely on the scientific method is limited. Ratzinger writes, "True knowledge is being struck by the arrow of beauty…being overcome by the beauty of Christ is a more real, more profound knowledge than mere rational deduction."[294] It would be difficult to accuse Balthasar and Ratzinger of sentimentality and/or anti-intellectualism. Neither would underestimate the importance of careful and disciplined reflection upon Scripture and Tradition. It is for the sake of Truth and Goodness that Balthasar begins his trilogy with aesthetics. Balthasar is broadening the method and scope of exploration. He is reopening frontiers long

[293] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 36.
[294] Ibid., 36.

closed by modernity. Beauty does not draw us away from truth and goodness but to it. With Balthasar's trilogy in mind, Edward T. Oakes writes:

> "One must perceive Christian revelation as beautiful and only then would one's soul be prompted to follow Christ in a dramatic life of Christian discipleship. Finally, once inside that life of obedience to Christ, one comes to see how and why Christianity is true. If one starts with the question of the truth of Christian revelation, one must engage in apologetic arguments. But for Balthasar, argument just gets in the way of the contemplative gaze necessary for the first movement of perception. The spark of delight moves us to seek God.
>
> Theology done in reverse order can reinforce rather than overcome impediments to faith. Today's rampant secularization is due, at least in part, to modernity's habit of looking at things through the wrong end of the telescope. Influenced by Descartes and Kant, most theology in modernity has started with questions of *truth* (like apologetics and the justification for theological claims) and then set forth the *ethical* obligations incumbent upon the Christian, with *aesthetics* treated, when it was treated at all, as a mere embellishment. This approach proved to be sterile. Balthasar sees a role for apologetics but argues that unless the theologian is first enraptured by revelation his arguments will ring hollow. In other words, the order must be: contemplative, kerygmatic, dialogic."[295]

Balthasar is challenging the way theologians *do* theology. But it is no less a challenge to the ways in which pastors *do* ministry. Returning to Ratzinger, he concludes his comments on the ordering of Bathasar's trilogy by writing, "Of course, this is not only and not even principally a problem for theology; rather it is also a problem for pastoral ministry, which must arrange for people to encounter the beauty of the faith."[296] The cradle of this encounter is not in the church school or the mission field but in a worshiping community where the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered. This is to acknowledge, as does James Smith that "the way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around."[297] Drawing on Augustine, Smith posits that humans are "desiring animals."[298] Put another way, humans are lovers, and this love has an aim or intention. The pastoral task is in helping to direct that

[295] Edward T. Oakes, "Reason Enraptured," *First Things* 232 (April 2013): 102-103.
[296] Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus*, 36.
[297] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 47.
[298] Ibid., 51.

aim, or inculcating desire rightly.[299] Certainly, a thinking faith is important (otherwise this project is a futile task!). And yes, habits are vital. However, "only the lover sings."[300] Balthasar writes:

> "The last of the transcendentals, Beauty guards and sets her seal on the others: *in the long run* the True and Good do not exist without this luminosity which is both graced and gratis. And if Christianity, following the modern trend, were to embrace merely the True (faith as a system of correct propositions) or merely the Good (faith as the subject's greatest advantage and benefit), it would have fallen from its true eminence. If the saints interpreted their existence as being for God's greater glory, they were also always the guardians of the Beautiful."[301]

It would seem we are nearing the end of the "long run." Both the True and the Good are starting to feel as tentative as Beauty. The rise of nominalism, the rejection of universals, and the ruin of metaphysics has meant that first Beauty, followed by Truth and Goodness, and finally Being itself are philosophically nearing the end of their existence. The challenge for the Church is to not follow this "modern trend," and to reclaim the task of serving as "guardians of the Beautiful."

It goes without saying, before the parish priest can "arrange for people to encounter the beauty of the faith," he must arrange for his own encounter with beauty. More to the point, this encounter must not be a momentary instance, an event that is embedded in the call narrative of the pastor's receding memory. The pastor's encounter with beauty must be a constant *discipline*,[302] the pushing away of rival lovers, and the relinquishment of self-definition and self-

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[299] Many of these discussions (i.e. MacIntyre and Hauerwas) about inculcating desire center around the language of practices, habits, and virtue. Absent many of these conversations is the role beauty plays in shaping desire and giving purchase to these formative practices. It is as if we have come to realize that ours is not primarily a *thinking* (Truth) faith only to have arrived at ours as a *doing* (Goodness) faith. While I find it helpful to move beyond a strictly rationalist picture of the human person, I do not find it compelling to talk about the inculcating of desire with addressing the role of beauty.

[300] Josef Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).

[301] Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Transcendentality and *Gestalt*," in *Communio* XI/1 (Spring 1984), 11-12. Emphasis added.

[302] By "discipline" I am thinking of habits, practices, and liturgies that help shape the pastor's affections. See Smith, "Love Takes Practice: Liturgy, Formation, and Counterformation," in *Desiring the Kingdom*, 75ff.

determination in order to be, as Charles Wesley wrote, "lost in wonder, love, and praise."[303]

Acedia

I have sketched the broader theological reason why beauty matters for pastoral ministry. Now, I want to speak more specifically to the importance of beauty with regards to pastoral identity. As stated earlier, many pastors have lost some ability to behold beauty. They sing not with the psalmist, "Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation" (35:9). There is no or little delight or joy in the modern pastor's calling.[304] The sign that the pastor fails to behold beauty in a way that rightly orders his love towards the True and the Good is the absence of joy and the subsequent onset of a very old and spiritual sickness: *acedia*.[305]

Acedia (Gr. a-kedeia) means without care or grief, carelessness, or lack of concern. *Acedia* is admittedly difficult to define in English. From various patristic authors, *acedia* has been rendered in any number of ways: fatigue, weariness, exhaustion, loss of hope, sadness, despondency, listlessness, apathy, torpor, boredom, and so forth.[306] It has made its way down to us in history as one of the seven deadly sins. In the Middle Ages *acedia* was rendered "sloth." However, if all we mean by "sloth" is laziness and idleness, then we have not exhausted the meaning of *acedia*. For Aquinas, laziness is a possible result of *acedia* but it is not *acedia*.[307] To be in the grips of *acedia* does not necessarily mean that one is idle. The very opposite can be, and often is, true as well. Another historic

[303] Charles Wesley, *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* (1747).
[304] Two extensive studies on a wide range of health issues related to clergy are *Pulpit & Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership* and *The Duke Clergy Health Initiative*. The Lilly Endowment Inc. has also invested heavily in *The National Clergy Renewal Program*, a major effort at strengthening and nurturing pastors who have been serving the parish for some time. These are just a few of the ongoing efforts in North America acknowledging the struggling mental and physical health of contemporary clergypersons.
[305] Dietrich Bonhoeffer struggled with and wrote about acedia. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, English edition edited by John W. de Gruchy, trans. Isabel Best, Lisa DaHill, Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens, 1st English edition, vol. 8 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 79, 180, 567.
[306] Jeffrey A. Vogel, "The Speed of Sloth: Reconsidering the Sin of Acedia," *Pro Ecclesia* XVIII.1 (2009): 53.
[307] Ibid., 54.

rendering of *acedia* is "boredom." Ralph Greenson describes boredom as a "state of dissatisfaction and a disinclination to action; a state of longing and an inability to designate what is longed for; a sense of emptiness; a passive, expectant attitude with the hope that the external world will supply the satisfaction; a distorted sense of time in which time seems to stand still."[308] This is where restlessness comes in to play. The object of one's desire and the strength of that desire are too weak; resulting in, as Josef Pieper claims, "the roaming unrest of the spirit."[309] The final way *acedia* has been rendered is "sorrow." Jeffrey Vogel writes, "Aquinas, following John of Damascus, describes *acedia* as an 'oppressive sorrow' that 'so weighs on a man's mind that he wants to do nothing.' And Sorsky says in his monastic rule that the 'cruel and oppressive spirit of *acedia* is accompanied by the spirit of sadness or follows after it.'"[310] *Acedia* is sorrow, sadness, even despair. Catholic theologian, Reinhard Hutter, helpfully distills these various renderings of *acedia*:

> "It is the very forgoing of friendship with God—which is the fulfillment of the transcendent dignity and calling of the human person—and the embrace of the self-indulgent deception that there never was and never will be friendship with God, that there never was and will be a transcendent calling and dignity of the human person. Nothing matters much, because the one thing that really matters, God's love and friendship, does not exist and therefore cannot be attained."[311]

The very loss of friendship with God creates a vast emptiness that we attempt to fill with all kinds of earthly pleasures. *Acedia* is a sin of aesthetics, of the senses. These pleasures never satisfy. They only leave us wanting more—ever consuming, and becoming more frantic in that consumption. It is this pursuit that leaves us idling, bored, restless, and/or despairing—unable, or maybe more appropriately, unwilling to behold God's glory.

Evagrius of Pontus (c.365-435) was a monk, writer, and spiritual director living among the monks of the desert settlements in Egypt. He was, in effect, a pastor to pastors. One of his great concerns was that his fellow monks had come under

[308] Ralph Greenson, "On Boredom," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 1.1 (1953): 7.
[309] Vogel, "Speed of Sloth," 62.
[310] Ibid., 54.
[311] Reinhard Hutter, "Pornography and Acedia," *First Things* 222 (April 2012): 49.

the spell of *acedia*. Consequently, he is the first Christian thinker to have given some detailed attention to this vice. Evagrius describes *acedia* as following:

> "The demon of *acedia*—also called the noonday demon—is the one that causes the most serious trouble of all. He presses his attack upon the monk about the fourth hour and besieges the soul until the eighth hour. First of all he makes it seem that the sun barely moves, if at all, and that the day is fifty hours long. Then he constrains the monk to look constantly out the windows, to walk outside the cell, to gaze carefully at the sun to determine how far it stands from the ninth hour, to look now this way and no that to see if perhaps one of the brethren appears from his cell."[312]

Like the modern day pastor, the monk is anything but idle. He is pacing, looking this way and that, constantly marking time, gazing at the sun. He wonders if God, or rather some unfortunate fate or cruel demon, is in control of the path of the sun and the shape of our lives. Fundamentally, he has lost the ability to wait on the Lord, to delight in his ways—however mysterious—and to behold his strange and terrible beauty. Evagrius does not rank *acedia* as the gravest sins—he saves that for vainglory and pride.[313] However, *acedia*, claims Evagrius, is the more deadly because it causes the monk to lose the will, ability, energy, and desire to fight off these other more grave sins. Evagrius claims that *acedia* is the sin that "snatches away the soul."[314] *Acedia*, as Jeffrey Vogel concludes, is dangerous because "it constitutes the breakdown of the spiritual immune system."[315] It allows mortal sins to sow seeds of death within the human heart. Christoph Joest writes, "So then, if it is a question of the monastic life in general, *acedia* is not just one temptation among many, it is quite simply *the* temptation, the calling into question of one's entire existence, the major identity crisis, in which the very foundations of everything are severely shaken."[316]

Many pastors have forgone friendship with God. They increasingly inhabit a wilderness hostile towards the vows of their ordination. They constantly pace about, wondering if the scorching heat of the noonday sun will relent. And rather

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[312] Evagrius of Ponticus, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, trans. John Eudes Bamberger, (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 1972), 18-19.
[313] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 19-20.
[314] Ibid., 22-23.
[315] Vogel, "Speed of Sloth," 60.
[316] Ibid., 60.

than waiting—tasting and seeing the goodness and beauty of the Lord—they flee into the arms of a secular age. *Acedia* is especially cruel to ancient monks and modern day ministers because they have supposedly known, at some point in their life, intimate friendship with God. Like so many of Edward Hopper's paintings, *Room in New York*, invites the viewer into "apartment interiors peopled with figures who share intimate space, but not their lives."[317] *Room in New York* peers in through an open window. A couple, quite possibly husband and wife, share the space but are emotionally detached. The husband sits in a club chair curled over and completely focused on the newspaper. The female sits at the piano. Her body is turned, she has only one finger on the keyboard, and her face is in the shadows. It is as if she has something to say but can not cross the abyss created by the small round table separating her from her husband. The painting conveys the despondency of intimacy turned to unfamiliarity. *Acedia* is so cruel because it results not from a love never known but rather a love lost. The sorrow exists not because the couple has never known intimacy, but precisely because they have known it. Likewise, it is cruel enough to never know what it means to have friendship with God, but it is another thing entirely to have had friendship with God and then willfully given it up. It is this "having known" the friendship, goodness, and beauty of God that casts the minister into such a state of despair. Any relationship of value and depth requires considerable attention and discipline. *Acedia's* poison is to whisper that this endeavor of friendship is too much to bear. Jeffrey Vogel writes:

> "For Aquinas, *acedia* is finally opposed to charity, which is in this life 'nothing else than the beginning of glory in us.' Apparently, it is the juxtaposition of 'beginning' and 'glory' that the person suffering from *acedia* finds so toilsome. It is the prospect of glorification or participation in divine perfection, which, when considered alongside the struggle one must endure on its behalf, causes the person suffering from *acedia* to come to revile it. It is, at one and the same time, the heart's desire and its greatest affront. And this is what makes *acedia* a kind of sadness, specifically, an *oppressive* sadness: it is not a loss of belief in the possibility of glorification, of the human vocation to participate in the divine life, but a detestation of the divine good—even while knowing it constitutes one's own perfection—on account of the burden it imposes on one now. One does yearn

[317] Heidi J. Hornik, "Intimate Separation," *Christian Reflections: A Series in Faith and Ethics* 49 (2013): 57.

> for this glorification, for the promised rest, but turns away from it because the very act of yearning is wearisome."[318]

Here is the heart of the pastor's struggle. Pastors have beheld and perceived the beauty, or glory, of the Lord. That glory has been at work in the pastor's life, to redeem and sanctify, bringing joy and delight. But this glory is fearsome as well. It is demanding and transformative, claiming to imprint its image on every inch of the human soul and form. The pastor is one, who, at one time or another, has found rest in the Lord, and has allowed the glory of the Lord to cultivate its heavenly beauty in an earthly, fleshly, and aesthetic way within the pastor's life. The pastor turns from God's glory, having experienced that glory, and forgoes friendship with God because he is weary. Discipleship has become too demanding. Rebecca DeYoung writes:

> "Essentially, then, *acedia* is resistance to the demands of God's love. Why? Because a love relationship marks an identity change and a corresponding call to transformation…Love has a 'now and not yet' character; it is both gift and life-transforming work. It is just this transformation by God's love in us that *acedia* resists; it resists the spiritual rest that comes with accepting his presence in our hearts."[319]

Acedia results in a weariness born in attempting to follow both God and the spirit of the age. It is the dilemma Jesus presents to the rich young man, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

One treasure that modern pastors have not been able to give up and sell off is their desire to be relevant. In other words, they have traded beauty for relevancy. And they have assumed metaphors for ministry that reinforce this desire. This is the poison that has infected generations of pastors. This desire for relevancy is what has reduced pastors, as Stanley Hauerwas is often quoted as saying, to "a quivering mass of availability."[320] It is the reason why all the reigning metaphors are ones that have found purchase in a secular, consumer-

[318] Vogel, "Speed of Sloth," 63-63.
[319] Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, "Resistance to the Demands of Love," *Christian Reflections: A Series in Faith and Ethics* 49 (2013): 15.
[320] I heard Hauerwas say this, or a version of it, in his opening lecture of a Christian ethics class during my ministerial training at Duke Divinity, 2001.

driven, individualistic, therapeutic, deistic, and pluralistic world. They all hope to help the pastor ascend to cultural relevancy once more. Consequently, these metaphors are unable and ill suited to help the pastor behold and apprehend the beauty of God, resulting in the loss of joy and captivity to *acedia*. Evelyn Waugh, the acclaimed English novelist of the twentieth century, wrote, "Man is made for joy in the love of God, a love which he expresses in service. If he deliberately turns away from that joy, he is denying the purpose of his existence. The malice of Sloth lies not merely in the neglect of duty (though that can be a symptom of it) but in the refusal of joy. It is allied to despair."[321] This is the basis of the pastor's exhaustion, and subsequently his confusion, his identity crisis. This is what causes pastors to forego friendship with God, to forgo the joy and delight of God's glory, and to forego the joy and delight of experiencing the waste places of their lives and world blossom into the garden of the Lord (Isaiah 52:9). Their desire to be relevant has won out over their desire to be holy—to behold beauty and to be made beautiful. To succumb to *acedia* leads to a state of misery because it fails to view ministry as a gift received from God.

The pastor's fallen-ness and finite-ness—subjected to the pains of *acedia*—make an encounter with beauty difficult. Adding to the challenge, are what Joseph Ratzinger calls the "two fires" that oppose beauty in our day.[322] The first is the "cult of ugly," which says that anything, which appears beautiful, is actually a deception—The real state of things post enlightenment is a cruel and vulgar world that affords no true beauty.[323] The pastor who falls prey to the cult of ugly looks forward to the world to come, is tempted towards dualism, and acknowledges a God who has, as the saying goes, thrown in the towel on the possibility of redeeming this world for the next. The pastoral task is then reduced to implementing a heavenward evacuation plan for his flock. The second "fire" is

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[321] Evelyn Waugh, "Sloth," *The Sunday Times* (London), 1962; reprinted in Ian Fleming, ed., *The Seven Deadly Sins* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1962), 58. Quoted by Heather Hughes, "An Unconditional Surrender: Evelyn Waugh on *Acedia*," *Christian Reflections: A Series in Faith and Ethics* 49 (2013): 46.
[322] Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 40.
[323] Ibid.

what Ratzinger calls "deceptive beauty."[324] This is beauty that "diminishes man instead of making him great."[325] This false beauty seduces the pastor away from his work, the field he has been placed to labor in. It becomes, in Evagrius' language, an adversary that entices the pastor out of fruitful ministry, "This demon drives him along to desire other sites where he can more easily procure life's necessities, more readily find work and make a real success of himself."[326]

Both fires, the cult of the ugly and deceptive beauty, leave the pastor feeling anxious, abandoned, and despondent. In other words, the pastor is infected with *acedia*. The first sign of *acedia*'s foothold on pastors is a diminished desire for self-care, excused as a heroic act of sacrifice for some greater good. Essayist Kathleen Norris describes it as the "inability to address the body's basic daily needs." She continues, "It is also a refusal of repetition. Showering, shampooing, brushing the teeth, taking a multi-vitamin, going for a daily walk, as unremarkable as they seem, are acts of self-respect."[327] With the possibility of pleasure gone or diminishing, the routines of prayer, study, worship, and service are given up in a desperate act to find reasons to legitimize his existence in a world hopelessly ugly and crowded with sentimentality.

Despair or despondency, a cruel symptom of *acedia*, is in the words of Soren Kierkegaard "to lose the eternal."[328] Kierkegaard qualifies this assertion by writing, "and of this loss he does not speak at all, he has no inkling of it."[329] One might ask, is it possible for clergy—those who have been trained and called to attend to the eternal in the warp and woof of life—to lose the eternal? The religious professionals of Jesus' day proved it possible, and Evagrius, as we have seen, speaks not just of its possibility but also of its likelihood. The pastor's calling is to tend to the eternal in the everyday of parish life. Unfortunately, it is

[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 19.
[327] Kathleen Norris, *Acedia & Me* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 14.
[328] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 51
[329] Ibid., 51.

quite easy to forget to attend to the eternal in one's own life. If we consider the pastor as theologian, as we should, then Karl Barth's word of caution is apropos:

> "If anyone should *not* find himself astonished and filled with wonder when he becomes involved in one way or another in theology, he would be well advised to consider once more, from a certain remoteness and without prejudice, what is involved in this undertaking. The same holds true for anyone who should have accomplished the feat of *no longer* being astonished, instead of becoming continually *more* astonished all the time that he concerns himself with this subject."[330]

Regrettably, many pastors succeed in Barth's the "no longer" category. They have become unresponsive to the "astonishing stories" that are the pastor's calling to master, rehearse, and proclaim the wonders of God.[331] Without this "quite specific astonishment…even the best theologian would canker at the roots. On the other hand, as long as even a poor theologian is capable of astonishment, he is not lost to the fulfillment of his task." Barth continues, "He remains serviceable as long as the possibility is left open that astonishment may seize him like an armed man."[332] Barth offers us a candid image—cankered roots and armed men—that find resonance within pastoral ministry. Implicit in Barth's statement is an assumption that the most significant aspect of a well-formed pastoral identity is not the ability to administrate well, or excite audiences, or champion causes, but it is cultivating the necessary skills to witness and bear witness to the mighty acts of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as events in time and space as revealed in the divine Logos.

Returning to Kierkegaard, it is not as if the eternal has gone missing; rather, the person, in our case the pastor, is oriented in the wrong direction. Ironically, this is good news, according to Kierkegaard, because it means that this kind of despair, rooted in the temporal and not the eternal, leads not to death but to a shadowy and hollowed out life that is not fully beyond the pale of resuscitation.

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[330] Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 63-64.
[331] Ibid., 67. Story, for Barth, is equal to the narrative of the New Testament. It is the "sign(s)" of God's revelation, which serves as a "sort of alarm signal" to the theologian. It is the way the theologian stays alert and keeps his eyes and ears tuned to the "wonders" of God. 64-68.
[332] Ibid., 64

"In itself," writes Kierkegaard, "to lose the things of this world is not despair; yet this is what he talks about, and this is what he calls despairing."[333] The pastor is despondent, for good and bad reasons, over dwindling budgets, crumbling building, and smaller cradle roles. However, true despondency—that sickness unto death—is a loss of the eternal. "He claims," writes Kierkegaard, "he is in despair, he regards himself as dead, as a shadow of himself. But dead he is not; there is still, one might say, life in the person."[334] How then is life revived? Kierkegaard begins to hint at an answer, "If everything, all the externals, were to change suddenly, and if his *desire* were fulfilled, then there would be life in him again, then spontaneity and immediacy would escalate again, and he would begin to live all over again."[335] Here again we have that word 'desire.' It begs to search out an object, something that satisfies, a longing that is restless until discovered. Only that which is ultimate beauty can gratify all longings and kindle desire for the true and good—for Being itself. The Christian story says that kind of beauty, the kind that would allow, in Kierkegaard's language, a person to "live all over again," was made flesh, suffered, died, and rose again.

Wounded By Beauty

If it is the loss of beauty that plunges pastors into despondency, then it is beauty that can serve as a cure. Beauty is that which will rightly order the pastor's loves. Dostoyevsky's famous line, "Beauty will save us," has proved correct. Paradoxically, beauty saves not by mending but by wounding. Remember back to Barth's notion that a good theologian is like one who has been seized by an armed guard. The idea that beauty causes pain extends back to ancient Greek thought, for example, in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Towards the middle of the *Phaedrus* Socrates has a vision of the immortal soul.[336] The soul is winged and drawn by a chariot with a white and black horse.[337] The soul's wings convey it upwards where it travels throughout the heavens and keeps company with the gods. "By

[333] Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 51.
[334] Ibid., 52.
[335] Ibid., 52.
[336] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Stephen Scully (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2003), 246b.
[337] Ibid., 246b-d, 247a-c.

its nature," writes Plato, "the wing's natural capacity is to convey what is weighty upward and to roam among the stars where the race of the gods dwell; and, most of all bodily parts, it has a share in the divine—the divine which is beautiful, wise, good, and everything of this sort."[338] The immortal soul—soaring with the gods—participates in the divine transcendentals of beauty, truth, and goodness. Tragically the soul's feathers are gradually destroyed by wickedness, rivalry, shame, confusion, forgetfulness, and various other vices.[339] The result is that the soul loses its wings, falls to earth, and is implanted in a human embryo.[340] Earthbound, the soul's only hope is to be love-struck by another's beauty, so as to reignite desire, beginning to recollect the beauty of the gods.[341] As the soul becomes increasingly smitten with beauty, she begins to sprout wings, regaining the ability to take flight.[342] For Plato, the remembering of beauty is a re-membering of the soul, and pain and suffering are central to this re-growth:

> "He is warmed as he receives the in-flowing of beauty through the eyes. From the in-flowing, the natural power of the wing is watered and with this warmth the scabbing around the projection which sometimes before had hardened and closed up, preventing blooming, begins to melt away. With the in-flowing nourishment the wing's stalk under the surface of the soul begins to swell and to feel the urge to grow from its roots. At one time, you know, the entire soul was winged. In this state the whole soul boils and throbs violently—not unlike the itching and aching irritation around the gums that a child feels when he begins to teethe. That's the same sensation which the soul feels when her wings begin to sprout: she boils, aches, and itches."[343]

Beauty wounds the soul. It causes it to boil, ache, and itch. It seizes humans from a dulled existence and arouses desire towards that which is beyond comprehension. Joseph Ratzinger writes:

> "Plato sees the encounter with beauty as the salutary emotional shock that snatches man out of himself and 'carries him away.' Man, he says, has lost the perfection that was originally intended for him. Now he is forever in pursuit of the healing primordial form. Memory and longing set him searching, and beauty wrests him from the contentment of everyday life. It makes him suffer. We could

[338] Ibid., 246d-e.
[339] Ibid., 246e.
[340] Ibid., 248d.
[341] Ibid., 249c.
[342] Ibid., 249d.
[343] Ibid., 251b-c.

> say, in a Platonic sense, that the arrow of longing pierces man, wounds him, and in this way gives him wings, drawing him upward."[344]

Balthasar also understands the wounding of beauty as drawing humanity upward.[345] Balthasar's theological aesthetic follows in two parts. First there is the "theory of vision," that is "the perception of the form of God's self-revelation."[346] Second is what Balthasar calls the "theory of rapture," that is "the theory about the incarnation of God's glory and the consequent elevation of man to participate in that glory."[347] Perceiving, or seeing, allows for the uplifting participation in the glory of God. It is by grace, maintains Balthasar, that the form of divine beauty is made manifest in order that our participation in that form may be complete. The goal is not simply to perceive (vision) and be raised by and with (enraptured) beauty; rather, it is to terminate in action (mission). In this sense, Balthasar has a very Hebrew (*kabod*), and not Greek (*kalon*), understanding of beauty's aim. Edward T. Oakes writes:

> "Despite the obvious contrasts between Hellenic *kalon* and Hebrew *kabod*, beauty and glory have in common this crucial feature: both are enrapturing. But the difference between them is also crucial: for the perception of the divine epiphany to Israel results in mission…whereas Platonic beauty tends to terminate in static contemplation without further ado."[348]

This is why, according to Balthasar, the contemplative moment gives way to the kerygmatic moment, which in turn gives way to the dialogic moment.[349] A key passage for Balthasar regarding the mutuality and interrelatedness of the transcendentals:

> For the moment the essential thing is to realize that, without aesthetic knowledge, neither theoretical nor practical reason can attain to their total completion. If the *verum* lacks that *splendor* which for Thomas is the distinctive mark of the beautiful, then the knowledge of truth remains both pragmatic and formalistic. The only concern of such knowledge will then merely be the verification of correct facts and laws, whether the latter are laws of being or laws of thought, categories and ideas. But if the *bonum* lacks that *voluptas*, which for Augustine is the mark of its beauty, then the relationship to the good remains both utilitarian and hedonistic: in this case the good will involve merely the

[344] Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 34.
[345] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 122.
[346] Ibid., 122.
[347] Ibid., 122.
[348] Edward T. Oakes, "The Apologetics of Beauty," 213.
[349] Ibid., 215.

> satisfaction of a need by means of some value or object, whether it is founded objectively on the thing itself giving satisfaction or subjectively on the person seeking it."[350]

For the pastor, the pursuit of the True and the Good without aesthetic knowledge is an act in futility. Minus aesthetic knowledge, the theoretical or practical reasons are at best incomplete. Moreover, the relatedness of the three transcendentals cut to the heart of the pastor's central task or reason for being. Preaching, by which I would include that which is enacted (Table) and proclaimed (Word), is impossible—and I believe that is not too strong a word. Here Oakes, drawing on an illustration by Balthasar, explains:

> "In order to preach the Word, the minister must first have heard it and taken it to heart (Rom 10:14-15); this is the contemplative moment, when the believer is lovingly enraptured by the message he has heard. So enrapturing is this message that the hearer/contemplator can do no other than proclaim to others the glorious and joyous message that has come to him; this is the kerygmatic moment. Finally, the proclamation of that message will elicit a variety of responses from the preacher's hearers, just as Paul's preaching to the Athenians on the Areopagus generated a variety of responses (Acts 17:23-34)."[351]

The preacher studies, prays, and reflects on the Word of God. Following is the kerygmatic moment—the proclamation of that Word. Finally, there is the difficult task of allowing the story of the Triune God to engage with the various stories at work narrating the lives of those in the congregation. This is, according to Balthasar, the dialogic moment. Without beauty, the story the preacher tells becomes one of many stories trying to find its place among many compelling and/or enticing options. Without beauty, the pastor lacks that which alone is able to "wound" his hearers so that they may turn in belief, be transformed, commit their lives, and finally share in the glory of the crucified, risen, and ascended Son.

Returning now to the idea of beauty as inflicting pain, we see that this gains traction throughout the Christian tradition, even at unlikely points in the church's history. One improbable ally is John Calvin. Echoing Plato's account of beauty's draw on the soul, Calvin sounds noticeably un-Reformed. His language is

[350] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 147.
[351] Oakes, "The Apologetics of Beauty," 215.

surprisingly erotic. With phrases like "powerfully moving us" and "utterly ravishes and draws him to itself," there can be no good reason to charge Calvin with sentimentality.[352] Calvin's language finds precedent not just in Platonic thought but also in early Christian theology, mysticism, and of course the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible. There is Solomon's *Song of Songs*, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord" (8:6). In the fourth century Macarius the Syrian writes, "The soul is accepted not because of what it has done, but because of what it has desired."[353] There is Augustine's, "You were radiant and resplendent, you put flight to blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours."[354] Or there is Bernard of Clairvaux's often sung hymn:

> Jesus, the very thought of Thee
> With sweetness fills the breast;
> But sweeter far Thy face to see,
> And in Thy presence rest.[355]

If we fast-forward to the twentieth century, even Karl Barth strikes a surprisingly provocative tone, "God is beautiful. Beautiful…as a fact and as a force in the manner in which he asserts himself as the one who arouses pleasure, creates desire for himself and rewards with delight," and Barth later adds, "the one who as God is both lovely and love-worthy."[356]

The references above imply not some detached and reasoned interaction between the viewer and his subject, but instead a passionate and full-bodied engagement that leads to the inevitability of transformation, if not without a wounding of some sort. The beauty of God does not merely invite attention, so

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[352] Calvin, *Inst*. II.ii.41.
[353] Macarius the Syrian, *Homilies* (fourth century), as quoted by Belden C. Lane, Ravished by Beauty: The Surpising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vii.
[354] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), X.xxvii (38).
[355] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Jesu dulcis memoria.*
[356] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1 (1970).

claims Calvin, it ravishes.[357] Shortly after Calvin's death the English poet John Donne writes one of the most well known poems of all times. In it, Donne sums up in verse form the tradition—this highly charged language referring to beauty's effect on the soul—that finds resonance in much of Christian thought, liturgy and practice. In writing this poem, Donne is situated well within the Christian tradition, albeit a part of the tradition that has suffered a bout of amnesia:

> "Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
> As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
> That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
> Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
> I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
> Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end;
> Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
> But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
> Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
> But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
> Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
> Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
> Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me."[358]

The speaker in Donne's poem is in one instance resistant and in another eager to the inescapable, even forceful if not violent, advances of God. Ultimately though, the speaker acknowledges that this ravishing from God is his only hope. As Donne makes clear, our engagement with ultimate beauty, or true beauty as a transcendental, is nothing like a night in the concert hall or a stroll through an art gallery; rather, it is more akin to a consuming and transforming fire. In the Old Testament, a reference to the glory or beauty of God is frequently associated with "natural phenomena such as the dark cloud, a devouring fire, thunder and lightening, earthquake and storm."[359] In many ways this is why the beauty of God is something moderns attempt at great lengths to avoid. A pre-modern who knew a great deal about eluding the ravishing beauty of God is the aforementioned Augustine of Hippo, "Late have I loved you," writes Augustine,

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[357] Belden Lane in his book, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), offers and excellent reevaluation of Calvin's thoughts regarding beauty and desire in relationship specifically to creation.
[358] John Donne, 'Batter My Heart,' in *John Donne: The Major Works*, edited by John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177.
[359] Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology,* 418.

"beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you."[360] Augustine, like so many, initially resists the beauty that seizes and transforms in favor of a beauty that is fleeting and fickle. The early Augustine, like so many moderns, favors a beauty that tantalizes, entertains, and is undemanding and disposable. This is a beauty that leaves people autonomous, free to govern themselves. For pastors, as it is for anyone else, beauty is the chief threat to their leadership agenda. It is the thing that will undermine and alter their well thought out strategic plans. The beauty of the Triune God seeks to define and refashion.

Beauty's Power

The power of beauty to wound is the clue to the climax of the Christian story. Paradoxically, this is where Beauty itself is wounded for us and our salvation. So how exactly is the death of Jesus Christ beautiful? Where is beauty on Good Friday? How is it that we can call the suffering of Christ, his crucifixion, and his descent in to hell beautiful? How is the life of the Church, its saints and martyrs, an ongoing extension of Christ's presence on earth, to be found beautiful? How is there anything beautiful in the agony of the cross, particularly when Isaiah 53:2 declares that Christ has "no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (ESV). The great British preacher Charles Spurgeon faces this question head on:

> "But herein is a wonderful thing. The Lord Jesus has lost no influence by having been hanged upon the tree. Rather, it is because of His shameful death that He is able to draw all men unto Himself. His glory rises from his humiliation; His adorable conquest from His ignominious death….The crucified Christ has irresistible attractions. When he stoops into the utmost suffering and scorn, even the brutal must relent. A living Savior men may love, but a crucified Savior they must love. If they perceive that He loved them and gave Himself for them, their hearts are stolen away."[361]

Spurgeon's statement fits perfectly within the language used by the Church throughout history to speak about beauty, love, and the cross of Christ. This is language we have already explored: The language of a beauty that wounds, the language of a beauty that shies not away from passion and *eros*, and the

[360] Augustine, *Confessions*, X. xxvii (38).
[361] Charles Spurgeon, *The Marvelous Magnet*, John 12:32-33. No. 1717.

language of a beauty, anchored in the person and work of Christ, that transforms an instrument of death into God's throne of glory. The end result is communion—in Spurgeon's language, "their hearts are stolen away"—between God and those who look upon his beauty.

It is no wonder then that Bruce Herman, using Christian marriage as a metaphor for Christ's love for the Church, writes, "This broken or wounded beauty is such because it flows from a deep and committed love, by God's grace, ultimately defies time and sin, and in time yields the fruit of true intimacy and union."[362] Ratzinger makes the point that true beauty, as fully revealed in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, "involves wounds, pain, and even the obscure mystery of death and that this can only be found in accepting pain, not in ignoring it."[363] Or, as Balthasar writes, "Only Christ and God's Word in him in the form of suffering (the hiddenness *sub contrario*), the historical word of Scripture reveals anew God's glory."[364] Claiming Christ as the full expression of God's beauty, as beauty itself, does not require some sort of selective amnesia. Quite the opposite, the beauty of God is wrapped up in all of Christ's life and work. The cross is beautiful in its confrontation and then conquering of evil, of the ugly and deceptive beauty of the world. The beautiful cross is that which alone is capable of arresting man from his self-created disenchanted world, of fueling his longing for the true and the good once again. Granted, this longing will most certainly be viewed by many as foolish; hence the pastors reticence. Beauty, in Balthasar's words, "transports" one in such a way so as to leave them appearing idiotic:

> "Both the person who is transported by natural beauty and the one snatched up by the beauty of Christ must appear to the world to be fools, and the world will attempt to explain their state in terms of psychological or even physiological laws. But *they* know what they have seen, and they care not one farthing what people may say. They suffer because of their love, and it is only the fact that they have been inflamed by the most sublime of beauties—a beauty crowned with thorns and crucified—that justifies their sharing in that suffering."[365]

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[362] Bruce Herman, "Wounds and Beauty," in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*, eds. Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands, and Roger Lundin, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 113.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 80.
[365] Ibid., 33.

The specialization and professionalization of the priesthood, as we will explore in the next section, is largely an effort to rescue clergy from playing the culture's court jester. Pastors as managers, as therapist, as activists, and as celebrities are all veiled attempts to tame and tone down the glory of God, a glory which in its wounding will leave believers beholden to a deeper logic and engaged in a more profound drama—one that renders the Church a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others.

Unfortunately, beauty has mattered very little to the modern pastor. At best beauty is viewed as an adornment, as one of many means by which the pastor attracts prospective members, and at worst as a distraction to the really meaningful work of proclaiming truth (evangelical Protestantism) and doing good (mainline Protestantism). Beauty has long since, as Bruce Herman illustrates, been a "Cinderella of sorts—left out of the party as her sisters, goodness and truth, enjoy the attentions of the great minds of Christian tradition."[366] "Beauty requires," so writes Balthasar, "at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness." He continues to say, "We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past—whether he admits it or not—can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love."[367] One wonders if this is becoming the case for clergy. When beauty goes missing, the minister is left without joy, and ministry ceases to be a gift—both a gift to the pastor and a gift to the flock she tends. And the loss of ministry as gift—to which we now turn—is the pastor who has assumed metaphors for ministry that no longer cultivate nor value the aesthetic nature of the Christian faith. The result is a minister failing to behold the beauty of God, one who is lost to the charms of rival lovers, set on a path towards captivity to *acedia*.

[366] Bruce Herman, "Wounds and Beauty," 111.
[367] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 18.

GIFT

III. Ministry as Gift

Our first word has been *beauty*. The previous section claimed that the apprehending and then proclamation of divine beauty is a central aim of pastoral ministry. It is, as St. Ireneaus of Lyons has written, "For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God."[368] The pastoral life is rooted in beholding the glory of God made fully know in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As a consequence of this vision, the pastor then makes arrangements for his or her flock to encounter this divine incarnate beauty.

Part two turns to our second theme, *gift*, and asks the question, "How has the church historically formed pastors to perceive and therefore invest fully in what is good, right *and* beautiful?" Apprehending beauty gives rise to an understanding of ministry as gift, which in turn produces in pastors a profound sense of deep joy. Joy is essential to the pastor's recovery from and resistance against *acedia*. "Joy," as Josef Pieper says, "is by nature something secondary and subsidiary."[369] It is, in other words, derivative of something held in highest honor—that which is prized in the beholder as preeminently beautiful. Pieper continues, "But are there not countless reasons for joy? Yes. But they can all be reduced to a common denominator: our receiving or possessing something we love."[370] Consequently, if the pastor has lost the ability to love—to say nothing of loving rightly—then she is unable to experience and express joy. Once more, Pieper concludes, "We desire something that we 'like' and 'love'—and then we receive it as a gift."[371] That "something" that the pastor ought to desires above all else is the true, the good, and the beautiful—that which is convertible with Being.

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[368] Ireneaus, *Against Heresies*, 1:490 (IV.20.7).
[369] Josef Pieper, "Joy Is a By-Product," in *Josef Pieper: An Anthology*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 32.
[370] Ibid., 33. Pieper goes on to reference both C. S. Lewis and Thomas Aquinas, in that order, to explain that joy is not some shallow sense of happiness and sublimity. He quotes Aquinas as saying, "out of love comes joy as well as sadness" (36).
[371] Ibid., *emphasis added*.

Joy is at the heart of pastoral ministry because it is at the heart of the Christian faith. Alexander Schmemann writes:

> And yet, from its very beginning Christianity has been the proclamation of joy, of the only possible joy on earth. It rendered impossible all joy we usually think of as possible. But within this impossibility, at the very bottom of this darkness, it announced and conveyed a new all-embracing joy, and with this joy it transformed the End into a Beginning. Without the proclamation of this joy Christianity is incomprehensible. It is only as joy that the Church was victorious in the world, and it lost the world when it lost that joy, and ceased to be a credible witness to it."[372]

The loss of joy—which is to say the loss of ministry as gift produced by the pastor's passion for the beautiful—is to render pastors unconvincing witnesses to the gospel. As Schmemann cautions, any discussions regarding the nature of the "Church, its mission, its methods" are only "useful and meaningful within a fundamental context, and that context is the 'great joy' from which everything else in Christianity developed and acquired its meaning."[373] Here Schmemann, for our purposes, makes a critical point: "Joy, however, is not something one can define or analyze. One enters into joy."[374] The acquisition of joy is aesthetic in nature; it requires a bodily-based engagement with God's created order. This is what makes beauty essential to pastoral ministry. Without beauty there is little to no hope of the pastor entering into joy. Furthermore, to enter into joy implies *relationship*. This means, among other things, that the experience of joy is the reception of a gift and in turn the sacrifice of the self. As joy enters in it also draws one out. Beauty produces the gift of joy that results in gratitude, and it is gratitude that fuels sacrifice. Without gratitude, sacrifice becomes, for the pastor, the exhausting task of always giving not from a position of abundance but from scarcity. As a result, pastoral ministry is no longer received as a *charism*

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[372] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 24.
[373] Ibid., 24. To emphasize his point, Schmemann quotes the beginning and end of the Gospel of Luke: "For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10); "And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52).
[374] Ibid., 25. When Schmemann talks about entering into joy he is thinking about the sacrament of joy, the Eucharist.

but as a forced and labored exercise of the intellect and the will in service to a deceptively lovely god(s).[375]

Beauty is the key to pastors understanding ministry as a joy-filled gift to be entered into and to be ravished by. Not surprisingly then, the Church has long understood a need to create the conditions by which pastors apprehend the skills to behold the beauty of God. The church has done so by using the classic threefold model of ministry—calling, office, and profession—that has served as the broad ecumenical basis for forming pastoral ministry as a gift.[376] Metaphors in themselves, this threefold model, in balance, has given rise to or supported various metaphors for ministry that have refined the pastor's ability to engage the imagination in beholding the beauty of the infinite. Rowan Williams, in an interview on the life of C. S. Lewis, said, "I think more and more people are aware that you acquire faith not by a great exercise of the will, not by a great exercise of the intellect, but by something that happens to your imagination when it's turned upside down."[377] Williams is speaking about the Christian life in general, but his insight extends more specifically to the formation of pastoral ministry as gift. When the threefold understanding of ministry becomes unbalanced—where calling, office, or profession is elevated at the exclusion of the other two—this gives rise to metaphors or models that see ministry primarily as a force of the will or the intellect. Whether its Christian life or Christian ministry, to view the faith as an "exercise of the will" or an "exercise of the intellect" is Semi-Pelagian. On the other hand, to conceive faith as a converted imagination or as Rowan Williams writes, an imagination "turned upside down," is to return to ministry as gift, as grace.

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[375] An important forum for the role of joy in faith and life is the ongoing *Theology of Joy Project* at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture: http://faith.yale.edu/joy/about .
[376] Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983).
[377] Melissa Steffan interviews Rowan Williams, "Why Rowan Williams Loves C. S. Lewis," *Christianity Today*, November 1, 2013, accessed July 31, 2015, http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2013/november-web-only/qa-why-rowan-williams-loves-cs-lewis.html.

Ministry is the increasing attentiveness and eager reception to the revelation of God's beauty. This is the subsoil of a well-formed pastoral identity, one that is honest about the scope of his or her calling and as a result evermore ready to gladly welcome rather than build the kingdom of God. The pastor who beholds the glory of God becomes a herald of God's kingdom.[378] Karl Barth identifies heralds as those "who have something to relate about [God], the freedom of confessors who cannot keep silent but must speak of Him, their freedom to expose themselves to His *glory*, to commit themselves to His honour with clear and definite words, to be serviceable to Him in and with these words, to be His declared and decided partisans."[379] The requisite task of a herald is first attentiveness and not proclamation. Reflecting on Barth, William Willimon writes, "The preparation required of the herald is attentiveness, notice, the courage to listen. The German word *Wahrnehmen*—to perceive, to observe, to be attentive—this is the homiletical preparation required of the herald: Behold!"[380]

To receive ministry as gift means that pastoral identity will likely be formed in ways that run counter to the prevailing winds of culture. Arguably the most significant and certainly the most memorable leaders in the Church's history have taken the Apostle Paul up on his offer: "I wish you would bear with me in a *little foolishness*. Do bear with me!"[381] Paul's use of the word *little* (Gk *mikros*) is wholly ironic.[382] Paul, comparing himself to the false apostles operating in Corinth, writes:

> "But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendents of Abraham? So am I. *Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman—I am a better one:* with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, an often near death."[383]

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[378] See James Stewart, *Heralds of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946).
[379] *CD*, III, 4, p. 125. (*Emphasis added*.)
[380] William H. Willimon, *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 167.
[381] 2 Corinthians 11:1, NRSV
[382] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 444-5.
[383] 2 Corinthians 11:21b-23, NRSV

This is much more than a little show of foolishness.[384] Ministers of Christ, to use Paul's phrase, have not been, according to modern therapeutic language, a particularly well-adjusted, well-boundaried, well-reasoned, or well-tempered group.[385] Paul's word for *foolishness* is not the Greek word "*moria*" (The Greek root is found in the English word "moron"), whose opposite is *wisdom* (Gk *sophia*), but instead the Greek word "*aphrosyne*."[386] The opposite of "*aphrosyne*" is *moderation* or *sober-mindedness* (Gk *sophrosyne*).[387] Ministry, it seems, when done well and as it should be, has always had more than a little foolishness and madness to it. This point seems to be lost on today's mainline denominations where, for instance, most judicatories require inquirers or candidates seeking ordination to undergo a series of psychological evaluations examining their mental fitness for ministry. Many a candidate for ordination has wondered whether Paul or Peter, Stephen or, for that matter, Jesus himself would pass the standard battery of psychological examinations. As referenced at the end of the last chapter, Balthasar makes the point that "both the person transported by natural beauty and the one snatched up by the beauty of Christ must appear to the world to be fools, and the world will attempt to explain their state in terms of psychological or even physiological laws."[388]

Paul's words have never been more apropos, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe."[389] Pastors may

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[384] At this point in the argument, Paul is not so much concerned with the teaching of another "gospel." Instead, he is concerned that his opponents do not accept his understanding of Christian ministry as essentially cruciform. See Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 442.
[385] This is true for servants of YHWH in both the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. Abraham Joshua Heschel's classic study of the Hebrew prophets opens by asking, "what manner of man is the prophet?" Among many other qualities, Heschel characterizes prophets as being "luminous and explosive" as well as hearing "one octave too high." Heschel writes, "The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears. He experiences moments that defy our understanding. He is neither 'a singing saint' nor 'a moralizing poet,' but an assaulter of the mind. Often his words begin to burn where conscience ends." See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: HarperCollins, 1962), 3-10.
[386] Paul does use "moria" rather than "aphrosyne" in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. See Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westmister John Knox Press, 1997), 27-29.
[387] NRSV Oxford, NT 304.
[388] Balthasar, *GL*, 33.
[389] 1 Corinthians 1:21, NRSV.

have the greatest opportunity, since the birth of the Jesus movement, to appear foolish to a world desperately needing but not wanting truth, goodness and beauty. Unfortunately, but understandably so, today's clergy have been resistant to play the fool. And this resistance is really a deeper resistance, consciously or subconsciously, to the beauty of the crucified Christ. Pastors have not shared St. Paul's enthusiasm for being culture's court jesters. North American clergy have been eager to embrace metaphors for ministry that help to validate their relevance to Christianity's cultured despisers. Much of the pastor's flight from beauty has been the unintended consequence of wanting, for good reasons and bad, to remain germane to their congregations and the broader community.

In Elie Wiesel's play *Zalmen or the Madness of God*, a rabbi is struggling to be true to his prophetic calling. He is torn between speaking the truth in love or acquiescing to the cultural or congregational norms that would assure the rabbi of a comfortable and quiet life in ministry. Zalman, the rabbi's assistant, is pleading that the rabbi must and should proclaim the word of God with all its force and power, "One has to be mad today to believe in God and in man—one has to be mad to believe. One has to be mad to want to remain human. Be mad, Rabbi, be mad!...Become mad tonight and fear will shatter at your feet, harmless and wretched." Zalman makes his case, but it is not so easy for the rabbi. He realizes there will be a cost. He is not so free as once he imagined. The rabbi responds to his lay leader, "Not so easy, Zalman, not so easy. Fear and I, we have shared the same roof for a long, long time."[390] Commenting on this play, Donald Messer writes:

> "The principled idealism of a seminarian often is lost to the compromises of congregational circumstances. Compromise itself is a noble art, but sometimes clergy and laity become chameleons unwilling to speak the maddening voice of God, though it is clear that the divine has mandates against bigotry, violence, and other forms of injustice."[391]

[390] Elie Wiesel, *Zalmen or the Madness of God*, adapted by Marion Wiesel, trans. Nathan Edleman (New York: Random House, 1975), 79-80.
[391] Donald E. Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 48.

A significant part of the challenge for pastors is that the church is largely filled with religious consumers. This means that clergy are measured by the quality of services rendered for fees—was the sermon uplifting, is the pastor readily available in times of need, does the church provide for my child's moral formation, etc. Of course, this pressures clergy to be attentive to the felt needs of their congregation rather than honing the ability to behold the beauty of God. The end is not an arranged encounter with the Almighty—a mad thing to be sure—but the measured dispensing of religious goods. Gary Charles writes:

> "As we participate in the drama of ministry, the Word of God calls us to listen, to speak, and to act in ways that others, and even our inner voices of caution, consider madness. The grace of divine madness is that it does not result simply from our deliberate decision-making. It comes to us more as gift. The theological, ethical, political and pastoral issues before the church are overwhelming and will only increase in the days ahead. Undoubtedly, God will provide us, as he did the rabbi, with moments for madness. We will hear that disturbing voice crying out to us, 'Be mad! Be mad!' Will we fall upwards? Or will we sit, disillusioned by our own silence?"[392]

Charles makes the point of this chapter—that ministry is gift. It is a gift from God. It is a gift to the pastor and a gift to the church. As such, the minister's primary attentiveness is to the giver, and the gift the Giver gives is his radiant beauty. Attentiveness to the giver and gratitude for the gift shapes the pastors faith and action. Madness is not a modern marketing technique to draw attention to the church's cause. Madness is the response to assuming the gift of ministry set against the backdrop of a congregation that asks its pastors to be religious functionaries and in a world that expects clergy to endorse the latest "-isms."

Call, Office, and Profession: Foundational Metaphors

To more fully understand the crisis in pastoral identity, we first must address how it is the church has formulated its understanding of ministry as gift—to examine how the church has equipped and formed pastors to keep talking like madmen—and to then see where the church has departed from or distorted such classic conceptions of pastoral identity. To begin, the church has always and from its

[392] Gary W. Charles, "The Divine Madness of Ministry," *The Christian Century* (April 20, 1983), 360.

earliest days acknowledged a need for pastoral leadership. Apart from the New Testament witness, the first known ordination liturgy is found in the early third century *Roman Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus.[393] Even with the arrival of the Reformation, and the subsequent narrowing of the gap between laity and priesthood, the church has always set aside men, and in some instances women, for dedicated service to the church.[394] For the purposes of this project, The Lima Faith and Order Commission's (1982) broadly ecumenical definition of the priesthood, will be our starting point:

> "In order to fulfill its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the church."[395]

While there has always existed great consensus on the need and biblical mandate for pastoral leadership there has been far less agreement on the nature of this leadership. Throughout the life of the church catholic, various traditions have developed helpful pastoral theologies, with their own distinctive, seeking to shape the pastor's calling and character in particular ways that are faithful to their respective tradition's mission and context. More broadly though, and as mentioned above, these various traditions have firmly rooted their pastoral theologies in a classical and ecumenical three-fold understanding of pastoral identity—as calling, as office, and as profession. These are the foundational metaphors that have given rise to or supported metaphors for ministry that cultivate the pastor's ability to behold the beauty of God. For centuries, these

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[393] Hippolytus, *On The Apostolic Tradition*, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 56-61.

[394] Vatican II, under the approval of Pope Paul VI, published *Lumen Gentium*. This document begins its discussion of ministry by addressing the Reformation concern over the division of laity and priesthood. *Lumen Gentium* emphasizes that the priesthood belongs not only to the clergy but also to the church as a whole. Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 14-96.

[395] I am quoting the now classic and ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), paragraph M8. Each tradition has its own theological distinctive with regard to ordained ministry. Paragraph M13 of the same document states, "The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry."

have helped to establish a well-formed pastoral identity, received as gift, and as one that seeks to keep the beauty of God well in view.[396]

Calling

In 1956, H. Richard Niebuhr, wrote his now classic book, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*.[397] In it he defines and then sketches out the four basic elements of the pastors call:

1. *The call to be a Christian*, "which is variously described as the call to discipleship of Jesus Christ, to hearing and doing of the Word of God, to repentance and faith"
2. *The secret call*, "that inner persuasion or experience whereby a person feels himself directly summoned or invited by God to take up the work of the ministry"
3. *The providential call*, "which is that invitation and command to assume the work of the ministry which comes through the equipment of a person with the talents necessary for the exercise of the office and through the divine guidance of his life by all its circumstances"
4. *The ecclesiastical call*, "the summons and invitation extended to a man by some community or institution of the Church to engage in the work of the ministry"[398]

For Niebuhr these elements converge into one call. However, he readily recognizes that the way in which these elements converge has been and continues to be greatly disputed, "In the cases of the pastoral ruler of Gregory the Great and of Chrysostom's priest the summons of the church to men whom it found divinely chosen by Christian and providential call was of the first importance. The secret call, the summons and decision that occurred in

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[396] Frequently, these three basic understandings have been viewed as a conflict between a "high church" versus "low church" conception of ministry. So, for instance, an emphasis on the pastoral ministry as a calling reflects the American revivalist tradition, while an accent on ministry as office tends towards traditions with well defined polities. For a more thorough discussion see Greg Jones and Kevin Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 80-81. Also see David Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
[397] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper, 1956).
[398] Ibid., 64.

solitariness, usually came after the public or church call."[399] Gregory the Great, makes it clear that the *ecclesiastical call* does not *always* precede in order or importance the *secret call*, "For Isaiah, when the Lord asked whom he should send, voluntarily offered himself, saying: 'Here I am, send me.' Jeremiah, on the other hand, was sent, and not wishing to be sent, was humbly reluctant, saying: 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.'"[400] Gregory maintains that both responses are equally faithful, "Notice how they spoke with a different voice, but their words did not emanate from a different source of love. For clearly, there are two types of affection—the love of God and the love of neighbor. Therefore, Isaiah, who yearns to profit his neighbors through the active life, seeks the office of preaching; while Jeremiah, who zealously clings to the love of the Creator through the contemplative life, opposes being sent to preach."[401] Gregory may be a bit charitable to Jeremiah and those who would follow his example. Consider Gregory of Nazianzus who had a Jeremiah-like call to ministry. While living a quiet ascetic existence in the desert, Gregory received a call from his bishop father, Gregory the Elder, to enter the priesthood. His response was less than enthusiastic, writing that his ordination was "an arbitrary act of oppression."[402] Gregory would acquiesce and eventually embrace this call, recording his tumultuous journey in the letter, "The Flight to Pontus." The early church would have understood that one's sense of call would not necessarily originate from an interior place within the person's psyche. In fact, quite the opposite was true. The providential and ecclesial calls would often precede and even be at odds with an individual's desire and understanding of his or her vocation. This was taken to be an entirely normative experience and pathway to parish ministry. It is possible for the gift that is ministry to have a certain hidden-ness to it. This is why beauty is experienced as a wounding, a shock, and why it

[399] Ibid., 65.
[400] St Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007) 38-39.
[401] Ibid., 39.
[402] As quoted in Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 11. The full citation can be found in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 2.6.

can take the prospective pastor by surprise. Often the realization of ministry as gift arrives long after the pastor surrenders to and enters in to the beauty of God.

A slow sea change occurred as a result of the Reformation, and the *secret call*, to use Niebuhr's terminology, gradually ascended in primacy. John Wesley's sentiments typify the reordering of the elements of call, "I allow that it is highly expedient, whoever preaches in his name should have an outward as well as inward call; but that it is absolutely necessary I deny."[403] Wesley was voicing a growing concern in the eighteenth century: A person might assume the office of ordained ministry or even be exceptionally well-educated but "lack the essential Christian passion and commitment that can only come from a clear, distinctive call."[404] Increasingly in the eighteenth century, this was viewed as not just an unfortunate state of the priesthood but as a real and dangerous threat to the vitality—salvation and sanctification—of local congregations. This is what prompted the evangelist Gilbert Tennet to compare an "unconverted minister" with "a man who would learn others to swim before he'd learned it himself, and so drowned in the Act and dies like a fool."[405]

Positively speaking, to understand ordained ministry as "calling" is to root pastoral identity in divine initiative. Shaping and identifying the leadership of the church is God's doing. Therefore, pastoral identity is not primarily about a person's giftedness or desire, although those are important factors, but rather it is first and foremost about the will of God being recognized, received, and obeyed. The pastor, rooted in a deep sense of God's call, is liberated from a paradigm of leadership measured by performance, talent, perfection, and results. God's initiative trumps any deficiency or delinquency. "Freedom for ministry," to use a phrase coined by Richard John Neuhaus, comes in knowing that God's call establishes, animates, and completes the pastor's sense of doing and being.[406]

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[403] As quoted in Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church*, 65.
[404] Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*, 82.
[405] Cited in Carroll, *God's Potters*, 22.
[406] Richard John Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

What the pastor does bring to God's "calling" is attentiveness to the glory of the Lord. To understand ordained ministry as a "calling" presupposes that the pastor is one who has cultivated the ability to listen and see well.[407] The called pastor has learned to be attentive to God, Scriptures, the body of Christ, his neighbor, and the world around him. The tendency is to think the constitutive task of pastoral ministry is oral in nature. However, before the minister is ever effectively a communicator of the gospel, he is first a lifelong receiver and hearer of that good news. The "called" pastor is one who has disciplined his senses—eyes, ears, intellect, and imagination—to be attentive to God at work, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in and through a world that finds its climax in the cross of Christ.

Ordained ministry as "calling", when left unchecked by an understanding of ministry as "office" and "profession," can lead to the disruption and distortion of a well formed pastoral identity in several ways. First, ministry as calling can tend towards anti-intellectualism. The populist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the beginning assault on the intellectual life of American pastors. At first the revivalist movement proposed no threat to the life of the mind. In fact, one of America's greatest theological intellectuals, the Congregationalist minister Jonathan Edwards, was a leading figure in the First Great Awakening. However, two impulses, described by historian Mark Noll, slowly eroded an active Christian life of the mind, "The first was the way the revival promoted a new style of leadership—direct, personal, popular, and dependent much more on a speaker's ability to draw a crowd…The second was the way the revival undercut the traditional authority of the churches. Ecclesiastical life remained important, but not nearly as significant as the decision of the individual close to Christ."[408] Revivalist leaders feared that the church was too obtuse in its teachings and too nominal in its piety and praxis. The result was not merely a rejection of the church's intellectual tradition, but an unintended ignorance about it. Two early nineteenth century revivalist pastors,

[407] Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*, 103-104.
[408] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 61.

Robert Marshall and J. Thompson, when confronted with quotes from Calvin, replied, "We are not personally acquainted with the writings of John Calvin, nor are we certain how nearly we agree with his views of divine truth; neither do we care."[409] These tides continued to rise in the twentieth century, dramatically shaping American pastoral identity through the Holiness Tradition, Pentecostalism, the West Coast Jesus movement of the 1960's and 1970's, and the Seeker and Church Growth movements of the 1980's and 1990's.

The second problem with an overemphasis on "calling," is that ordained ministry can be reduced to a search for self-actualization. Jones and Armstrong write:

> "Unfortunately, in recent decades we have allowed the rich Christian tradition of 'calling' for laity and clergy to degenerate into self-initiated searches for work. While for many people that becomes an external preoccupation with career, money, and prestige, for others it becomes an internal preoccupation with their own woundedness."[410]

In this sense, God's voice becomes far less important than an individual's inner voice, or else God's voice becomes synonymous or confused with one's inner voice.[411] More likely, God's voice is unable to be heard over the constant drumming of an individual's own interior wants and wounds. In a church culture saturated by Thomas Jefferson's unalienable rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" it is assumed that God's call is synonymous with an individual's personal longings, choices, and hurts. In Niebuhr's terms, the *secret call* is held at the overwhelming exclusion of the other three senses of call. The pastor thus becomes uninterested or unable to behold the beauty of God.

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[409] Ibid., 63.
[410] Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*, 89.
[411] Phillip Cary, in his book *Good News for Anxious Christians*, speaks about the burden placed on the individual who depends heavily on an inner voice to discern the will of God. He recounts the time he read a student's paper on the topic of revelation: "The paper I was reading criticized the concept of revelation, and behind the criticism was anguish. The problem with revelation, my student wrote, was that you can never really tell if it's the voice of God…I realized pretty soon that she wasn't talking about the word of God in holy Scripture. That's just not what the term 'revelation' meant for her." Cary wrote at the conclusion of her essay, "I have good news for you: the voices in your heart are all your own. So you don't have to get all anxious about figuring out which one of your voices is God. None of them is. The revelation of God comes in another way, through the word in the Bible, and this is something you can find outside your heart." Phillip Cary, *Good News for Anxious Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 1-2.

Ministry as gift is lost, and the pastor experiences an erosion of joy. The consequence are pastors who hold too grandiose of views of their talents, have a desperate craving to be admired, are prone to excessive anxiety, moodiness, envy, and depression. In language used previously, pastors become susceptible to *acedia*, and this leads to pastors who view themselves, at the extremes, either as heroic champions or tragic martyrs. The intensifying privatization of "calling" has left little room for external confirmations or challenges to a person's own determined sense of God's leading.

The third challenge of a pastoral identity shaped by "calling" alone, is the potential abuse of power and authority. Quite ironically, this is precisely what the Populist movement of the new American republic set out to remedy. The democratization of American Christianity was, in affect, an effort to place the church and its leadership firmly within the hands of the people, much like every other privileged and powerful cultural U.S. institution of that era. And indeed, the American church to a large extent was democratized, particularly with respect to the closing gap between clergy and laity, the rising importance of a personal spiritual experience over orthodox teaching, and the explosion of numerous new religious expressions and social experiments.[412] In spite of these dramatic changes, problems with the church's leadership only intensified rather than abated:

> "Attempting to erase the difference between leaders and followers, Americans opened the door to religious demagogues. Despite popular acclaim, these leaders could exercise tyranny unimagined by elites in the more controlled environment of the colonial era…Over the last two centuries, an egalitarian culture has given rise to a diverse array of powerful religious leaders, whose humble origins and common touch seem strangely at odds with the authoritarian mantle that people allow them to assume. The tapestry of American Protestantism is richly colored with interwoven strands of populist strength and authoritarian weakness."[413]

The pastor who could articulate—with charisma and a common touch—a compelling and convincing calling from God would go on to exercise unfettered

[412] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 9-11.
[413] Ibid., 16.

influence in the lives of many Americans.[414] This is the kind of churchman that Tocqueville was surprised to observe on his trip to America, writing, "Where I expect to find a priest, I find a politician."[415] All this is not to say that the democratization of American Christianity was an entirely negative development. Not in the least. However, it is equally true that the populist impulses of the last two or three centuries have had some unintended, often unacknowledged, adverse consequences on pastoral identity. The ascendancy of "calling" to the exclusion of the other classic understandings of ordained ministry have meant pastors have had to spend more time convincing potential parishioners of their holy anointing than spent in the presence of the holy. Pastors see themselves not as receiving ministry as a gift, but as being the gift of ministry to their parish. Pastors do not often see that before they can be a gift to a community they need to understand that ministry is first a gift from God. The antidote to this kind of myopic vision is the glory of God—the kind that blinded and knocked the Apostle Paul to the ground, a beauty that wounds.

Office

Thomas Oden points out, "According to Luke, the first public act of the apostles following Jesus' ascension was the apostolic commissioning of Matthias. Peter's first speech to the newly born ecclesia (even prior to the gifts of Pentecost) focused intently on the maintenance of the apostolic tradition through the office of ministry."[416] From its beginning the church knew it needed leaders, of what kind, that would be worked out over years, indeed centuries, and rightfully so even into the present. Ever to give priority to God's sovereignty but also acknowledge the church's orderliness and obedience, John Calvin writes, "For because the apostolic office was of such great importance that they dare not choose any one man for that rank, they brought forward two, on one of whom the lot should fall. Thus the choice had an open testimony from heaven, yet church

[414] An excellent example of this populist pastoral authority coming of age is Debby Applegate's Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Most Famous Man in America: The biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday Broadway, 2006).
[415] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, 2 vols. (New York, 1945), 1:317.
[416] Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 65.

order was in no respect neglected."[417] Calvin's two great concerns are that, first, "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:40), and secondly, that men be "ordained, then, by no human choice but by the command of God and Christ alone."[418] Clearly, Peter and the early church understood it to be Jesus' desire and design to establish offices that would continue to lead and unify a people to be a visible witness to Christ's ongoing work, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the world.

Whether implicit in the Pauline letters or explicit in the Pastoral Epistles, the New Testament lays the foundation for the church's leadership.[419] Pastoral ministry as an office is vital for the church's ongoing witness in the world. As Richard Lischer puts it, the pastoral office "is God's way of helping the church discover its true vocation in the world. It is God's gift to the church."[420] The church has called the priestly office a "charism."[421] A "charism" does not refer to a pastor's talents but rather a "specific gift from the Spirit for the benefit of the whole church."[422] Ordained ministry as office, in the classic sense, reminds us that the pastor is a gift to God's people not by virtue of his or her particular gifting but by God's grace, grounded in the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. When we understand the office of ministry as a "charism," then the pastor's identity is not first formed in a hierarchy—however important that may be—but through the image of a basin and towel. A pastor is called out of a community as much as she is sent into a community. Likewise, a pastor is set

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[417] Calvin 4.3.14
[418] 4.3.13
[419] For a detailed discussion on the offices of the church in the New Testament, see David L. Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001). The Pauline letters, as the earliest Christian writings, do not offer "consistency in the names and descriptions of 'offices' in the churches to whom Paul writes" (39). The church is forming, different communities are experiencing different challenges, and the early church is possibly experimenting with different forms of leadership. This may highlight a strength of the early church to adapt its leadership as necessary. Nonetheless, Paul is often confronting and correcting forms of leadership that are inconsistent with the apostolic witness. At the other end of the spectrum is the Pastoral Epistles. These letters offer the New Testament's most detailed account what qualifies a person for office and what tasks are set before leaders of the church. The three offices that emerge are "elders" (*presbuteros*), "bishops" (*episkopos*), and "deacons" (*diakonos*).
[420] Richard Lischer, "The Called Life: And Essay on the Pastoral Vocation," *Interpretation* 167, April 2005, 168.
[421] Lima document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Minsitry*.
[422] Lischer, "The Called Life," 168.

apart for service and not set above.[423] This means that ministry is a gift in two senses: first, the pastor receives the gift of ministry, and second, the pastor's ministry is a gift to the church.

In the North American Protestant religious imagination, ministry as office, in the classic sense, has become the anachronistic leg of the stool. Consequently, the office of ministry is viewed with confusion or suspicion. Martin Luther, in 1520, wrote a letter addressing matters related to religious vocation. Luther argued that priests held "offices" within the church, and he reaffirmed the importance of these offices, but he also argued that they were not held to exclude or rend useless the laity's involvement. Luther writes:

> It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the 'spiritual estate'; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the 'temporal estate.' That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it; and for this reason—namely, that all Christians are truly of the 'spiritual estate,' and there is among them no difference at all but that of office, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:12.[424]

Luther's teachings on vocation and office were liberating, empowering, and certainly pastoral. However, not all is well and good. The Reformers' shifting understanding of vocation and work led to the office of ministry's perplexing quest to seek definition.[425] As the lines between clergy and laity, vocation and occupation blurred, the pastor's office began not only to inform the broader culture's understanding about work but the reverse was true as well. As a result, the modern pastor has become a manager who takes cues from the likes of Warren Buffet, the Harvard Business Review, and the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit.[426] What began, in the Reformation, as the office of ministry

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[423] Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament*, 187-188.

[424] Martin Luther, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate, 1520* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960).

[425] William Placher offers a comprehensive anthology with concise introductions on the history of Christian thought regarding matters of vocation. He highlights the Reformation ideal of "every work a calling" and contrasts it the with post-Christian and post-industrial world's discomfort with vocation as being synonymous with job. William C. Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005).

[426] http://www.willowcreek.com/events/leadership/. I am not wanting to say any of these do work that is bad, unhelpful, or intentionally destructive. The church and its leaders have much to learn from the broader

informing and giving dignity to work of the laity has become the work of the laity redefining the minister's office.[427] Joseph Sittler, sounding strangely prescient in 1959, wrote in his Lyman Beecher Lectures:

> I have sought for a less violent term to designate what I behold, and maceration was the only one sufficiently accurate. Among the meanings of the term listed in the dictionary is this grim one: *to chop up into small pieces*. That this is happening to thousands of ministers does not have to be argued or established; it needs only to be violently stated. His time, his focused sense of vocation, his vision of his central task, his mental life, and his contemplative acreage—they are all under the chopper.[428]

Sittler continues by observing:

> These men are deeply disturbed because they have a sense of vocational guilt…This sense of guilt has an observable content. A minister has been ordained to an Office; he too often ends up running an office. He was solemnly ordained to the ministry in Christ's church. Most of the men I know really want to be what they intended and prepared for. Instead they have ended up in a kind of dizzy occupational oscillation.[429]

There is a sense in which Sittler is describing the pastor's experience in every age. Sittler's words, then as is now, are not a call to return to some idyllic age of ministry; rather, they are cause for reflection, to not take the current state of pastoral ministry as a given. Still, there is something in Sittler's diagnosis of the fragmented and frenetic pastoral life that rings particularly true in modernity and postmodernity. Karl Barth, a contemporary of Sittler and Niebuhr, too acknowledges the growing complexities of pastoral ministry in a modern world:

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culture. I am trying to say that the churches understanding of leadership is distinctly different in some very key ways.

[427] The word "office" comes from the Latin "opus" (work) and "facere" (perform). The Middle Latin is "officium," meaning to perform a task. The task that defined the pastoral office in pre-modernity was the performance of the divine hours or offices. The divine offices, as we know them today, began to take shape in the fourth century with the rise of Constantine in 312. The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation found the hours too complicated to be of any use both to priest and to laity. Luther, for instance, maintained the schedule and skeleton of the divine hours but insisted on the reading of more scripture. The Anglican Church, alone in nearly all the Western Protestant churches, has preserved the divine offices in the Book of Common Prayer. This is quite remarkable, considering that the performative task of the pastoral office was dominated by the patterns of prayer for so many centuries. It is hardly a surprise that as the lines of vocation and work began to change so too would the tasks called upon a pastor to perform. What that means today is that the so-called workweek of the modern Protestant pastor would hardly reflect his counterpart from the past. A detailed analysis of the development of the divine offices is written by Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993).

[428] Joseph Sittler, *The Ecology of Faith* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 78.

[429] Ibid., 84.

> It makes me think when I notice how my contemporaries, my former colleagues and fellow students are now one by one beginning to retire from their life's work. I can visualize what it means to spend forty years in giving instruction to first communicants, in seeking the right word at a grave side or for young married couples, in being pastor to every conceivable kind of folk, and above all in expounding the Gospel Sunday by Sunday and proclaiming the Word of salvation for the community and world to-day, in the face of all kinds of afflictions, irritations and hostilities, of the suspicion of the times and (not least, but above all) of all one's own unbelief.[430]

In the twentieth-first century, pastors, and the reservoir of tradition and ritual they represent, are increasingly inconsequential. As David Bartlett has written with regard to the pastoral office, "We are bit players in the drama of our times, brought in to perform purely ceremonial functions…And in the meantime we have to keep the institution going: we are, after all, paid to worry about the church on the corner and its future, if it has one."[431] Given Barth's analysis, it is no wonder that pastors wrestle with what he calls "the suspicion of the times" and "one's own unbelief." Ministry has been set adrift of its moorings. It has not only its cultured despisers to reckon with but also powerful currents from within the church asking that pastors do whatever necessary, by whatever means necessary to preserve the church's past in its future. This shift in the definition of "office" represents a shift in the pastor's attentiveness—away from the true, the good, and the beautiful, and towards the immediate.

Positively, understanding ministry as office is the church's longstanding acknowledgement that the church needs faithful administrative leadership of a certain kind. Ministry as office ought to remind us that the word "administration" and "ministry" have the same root.[432] Therefore, the question is not whether pastors administer, but whether they do it in a manner consistent with the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Richard Lischer offers this insight:

> Administration, so despised by the high-minded and neglected by the seminaries, takes on real meaning when it is understood as an extension of the most important administrative work of all, the administration of the sacraments. The

[430] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), III.iv.xi.
[431] Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament*, 2.
[432] Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*, 107.

> unproductive hours and busy work that all pastors complain of can be traced to the broken connection between administration as a secular tool and the administration of work and sacraments as a spiritual discipline. Pastoral administration, or stewardship, begins with stewardship of God's mysteries.[433]

Leading congregations well may be one of the greatest contemporary concerns for pastors today. This also means that the voices competing for the pastors attention are numerous and loud. Fortunately, the church in her wisdom has provided a pattern of administering well—take, bless, break, and give—that should steady the pastor in turbulent times. At the heart of this action is the Eucharistic meal, or the sacrament of joy. The church that understands ministry as office, at a profound level, knows that in order to be an effective and credible witness to the gospel it must think deeply about how it is governed, how it is administered.

The pastor's office is as much about shaping priestly identity as it is about structuring power. The pastor's office has a formative as much as a descriptive function. Before pastors ever *held* office they *kept* the offices.[434] An ancient understanding of office is less about assuming power than it is about attentiveness—disciplining the senses to hear and see the beauty of God. Throughout the church's history to assume the office of the priesthood was to assume a way of life shaped by the keeping of the liturgy of the hours, or the divine offices. Consequently, the history of the priesthood is intimately connected with the evolving and essential, predominately communal, practices of prayer.[435] This is what the church has called the *officium divinum*, which means divine service or divine duty. Ministry as office shapes a pastor's location within a gathered community of believers and shapes who the pastor is becoming in the presence of the Triune God and the Church. Inherent to the pastoral office, is the process of coming evermore fully to behold the watermark of God's revealed

[433] Richard Lischer, "The Called Life: An Essay on the Pastoral Vocation," *Interpretation* 59 (2005): 173.
[434] Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 297-8.
[435] Ibid., 306. With the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Tridentine Reform we have the "privatization of the divine office." This privatization of the priestly office establishes the conditions by which clergy will eventually assume metaphors that typify the heroic modern individual.

beauty. Pastors do not merely administer Word and Sacrament—and the ordering of church life that flows from that—but they are to also embody Word and Sacrament. To hold pastoral office is not primarily about executing one's duties, but it is rather about inhabiting a set of practices.[436]

Ministry as office is both exercising the ministry of Jesus and being formed by the ministry of Jesus. Put another way, ministry as office is life lived *for* Christ because it is life lived *in* Christ. As Thomas Oden writes, "All the varied activities of the pastor have a single center: life in Christ."[437] Christ defines both the pattern and content of ministry. In more traditional language, pastors are to pursue holiness, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"[438] The call to the priestly office is a call to holiness. This holiness, as Peter reminds us, is not some abstract idea of perfection but rather is grounded in the very particular life and work of Jesus of Nazareth. Holiness is being born in a stable, spending time at meal with friends, welcoming the stranger, casting out demons, healing the sick, hailed as a king, crucified as a criminal, resurrected as victor, and ascended in majesty. The pastor demonstrates that the Christian life is not simply the assent to certain doctrines that then leads to the affective communication of truth, the adoption of a particular ethic, or the implementation of a management style, but rather it leads to the living out of those truths in often mundane, yet life-altering ways. This is why Calvin writes, "Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life; is not apprehended by the intellect and memory merely, like other branches of learning; but is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds its seat and habitation in the inmost recesses of the heart."[439] Ministry as office, at its best, moves the gospel out of the pastor's head and into his heart, his feet, and his hands. It is the place of

[436] As referenced earlier, Evagrius of Pontus, "stay in your cell…"
[437] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 3.
[438] 1 Peter 1:14-16
[439] Calvin, *Institutes*, III.6.4

aesthetic arrest. If ministry as calling necessitates an initial attentiveness to the leading of God, then ministry as office requires an ongoing attentiveness to the ways of God, specifically the ways of Jesus.

Martin Luther did not set out to abolish but instead reform the priestly office. And John Calvin, for his part, though initially less optimistic than Martin Luther about the potential for reform within the Roman Church, was not looking to eliminate the pastoral office. Like Luther, Calvin did not see himself as deconstructing but rebuilding the priestly office. To this end, Calvin strikes a rather positive note in favor of ministry as office. He speaks of clergy as being like tools in the hand of a skilled craftsman:

> "Now we must speak of the order by which the Lord willed his church to be governed. He alone should rule and reign in the church as well as have authority or preeminence in it, and this authority should be exercised and administered by his Word alone. Nevertheless, because he does not dwell among us in visible presence, we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work."[440]

The establishment of offices is the church's recognition that it deals in power. It is the church's desire, attentive to Scripture and the lessons of Tradition, to order itself in such a way that power is exercised redemptively. It is the church attempting to act responsibly with the authority given to it in Christ's name. As thoughtfully as these church offices have been worked out, they can quickly abuse power and misuse their authority. When ministry as office is left unchecked by understandings of ministry as calling and profession, there then exists the increased potential for the governance and hierarchy of the church to be viewed as another corporate ladder to be climbed and exploited. John Richard Neuhaus offers this corrective:

> "The pursuit of holiness is premised upon the belief, indeed the Divine promise, that there is a complementarity of excellences. The vocation of each member is unique, and each member should sustain all other members in discerning and

[440] Ibid., IV.3.1

> pursuing their peculiar callings. Conflicts arise only when people try to pursue vocations that belong to somebody else."[441]

Rather than seeking the exemplary life of Christ, pastoral energy is focused anew on ascendancy in a hierarchy, the size of their congregation, and the perceived worldly importance of their parish or appointment.

Profession

Every Christian and Christian community has a calling from God. Peter addresses his wavering church, "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of *equal standing* with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."[442] Peter identifies himself as a "servant" and "apostle", and then goes on to remind his congregation that they are his equals in relationship to Christ. They too are servants and apostles of Jesus. For some, this was probably welcome news, for others not so much. Presumably, they have been leaving much of the work to the so-called professionals, unwittingly or otherwise. Peter makes himself even clearer, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."[443] In 1520 Martin Luther wrote his *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*.[444] He declared that all Christians were priests, and overruled the notion that ordained priests served as mediators between God and humanity. This liberation of the laity to exercise their priestly gifts had the effect of focusing the calling of clergy in a new way. This royal priesthood needed pastors who had the skill to equip them to extend Christ's mission into their homes and villages. Thus was born the modern understanding of ministry as profession.

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[441] Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry*, 205.
[442] 2 Peter 1:1
[443] 1 Peter 2:9
[444] Martin Luther, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility*.

Ministry as profession has its roots much deeper though than the Reformation. In medieval times the word "profession" was a term for one who "entered ecclesiastical orders in which special functions were performed, such as lawyers, physicians, and civil servants."[445] Therefore a professional was a priest or member of a religious order with theological training who specialized, through apprenticeships and university training, as appropriate to his special function within the life of the community. Originally, to be a "professional" meant that one "professed" his affirmation and allegiance to Christ and the Church. It was on the heels of the Reformation that this understanding of "profession" changed as separate faculties of theology, medicine, and law developed in European universities. A "professional" came to mean someone with a particular set of skills who had been trained in a certain way to assume a specific vocation. In other words, "profession" came to define much more what a person knew than what he or she believed.

On Christmas Day 1521 Andreas Karlstadt entered the chancel wearing not the usual cassock and surplice, but instead he wore his unadorned black academic robe. Three years later Martin Luther would follow suit. And John Calvin, from the beginning of his ministry, would don the black Geneva gown still worn by many Protestant ministers to this day. This change in vestments signaled an important shift in pastoral identity—away from the performance of ritual to the effective proclamation of the word. Amy Nelson Burnett explains this sea change,

> "With the Reformation, the focus of pastoral care shifted from performance of ritual to communication of a message. Instead of mediating salvation through their administration of the sacraments, the clergy now mediated it by making the word of God known to the laity. In their own eyes, at least, the status of the clergy rested not on their performance of sacramental acts but on their ability to communicate God's will as revealed in Scripture. The evangelical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers meant that they did not hold a monopoly on Scripture's interpretation. Nevertheless, the minister's training in languages, theology, and

[445] Clyde J. Steckel, "The Ministry as Profession and Calling," *Word & World*, volume I, Number 4

> the principles of exegesis gave him a claim to special authority in his handling of God's word."[446]

The minister's worth was no longer measured by a well-choreographed liturgy but through his mastery of Scripture, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, theology, rhetoric, and the exposition of sacred texts. The critical elements of this professionalization were "education and training in specialized knowledge and skills; a hierarchical form of organization able to regulate entry and performance; a developed career structure with advancement based on merit; obligation to provide services to all, and an esprit de corps uniting the members of the profession."[447] This escalating emphasis on ministry as profession would over time lead to an ever-deepening relationship with the academy. As an example, by the 1580's and 1590's nearly every minister in Basel had received university training, which would have been unheard of in the medieval church and among the first generation of Protestant clergy. By the end of the sixteenth century every pastor in Basil was required to have a master's degree.[448] To answer this growing expectation for a learned and professional clergy, Protestants in Europe founded thirty-three new universities between 1550 and 1700.[449]

This ascendancy of profession as a metaphor would not meet any large-scale challenge until the already mentioned American populist movements of the eighteenth century. During this period America was experiencing a full-scale revolt against all professions, not just the ministry. Law, politics, and medicine, along with the ministry, were being democratized.[450] The American populist took the Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers to an extreme. If the Reformation focused the role of clergy in a new way then the populist were happy to abolish traditional clerical roles altogether. Nathan Hatch writes, "In a culture that increasingly balked at vested interests, symbols of hierarchy, and

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[446] Amy Nelson Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation: Ministers and Their Message in Basel, 1529-1629* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 7.
[447] Ibid., 2.
[448] Ibid., 9.
[449] Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 32.
[450] Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 27-30.

timeless authorities, a remarkable number of people awoke one morning to find it self-evident that the priesthood of all believers meant just that—religion of, by and for the people."[451] The founder of the Disciples of Christ, Alexander Campbell, claimed that the New Testament established no precedent for higher education among clergy. The Anabaptists—Mennonites, Amish, various Brethren and German Reformed groups—all argued against education for ministers. This anti-clericalism was a reaction against a real or perceived elitism, driven by a Jeffersonian understanding of individual sovereignty and dignity. Suddenly the family tree of American religion was rapidly branching out in some heretofore untraveled territory—Quakers, Shakers, and American version of Methodism, Cumberland Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, Unitarians, Universalist, Free Will Baptist, Primitive Baptist, Mormons, and Adventist to name a few. Over the nature of pastoral identity and authority, among other things, a great divide was being drawn in the American religious landscape.

The response to this populist approach to ministry was swift and severe. Rapidly outnumbered and relegated to the sideline of American culture, the establishment church spoke in no uncertain terms about their disproval. Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale, heatedly described these revivalist pastors as those,

> "Who declare, both in their language and conduct, that the desk ought to be yielded up to the occupancy of Ignorance. While they demand a seven-years apprenticeship, for the purpose of learning to make a shoe, or an axe; they suppose the system of Providence, together with the numerous, and frequently abstruse, doctrines and precepts, contained in the Scriptures, may be all comprehended without learning labor, or time. While they insist, equally with others, that their property shall be managed by skilful agents, their judicial causes directed by learned advocates, and their children, when sick, attended by able physicians; they were satisfied to place their Religion, their souls, and their salvation, under the guidance of quackery."[452]

Founded in 1746, the College of New Jersey, later Princeton, would exist largely to train Presbyterian clergy. In its first two decades nearly fifty percent of its

[451] Ibid., 69.
[452] Ibid., 19.

graduates became ministers. This number fell by more than half following the American Revolution amid the resulting populist impulses. Presbyterians, for their part, would answer dramatically with the founding of sixty-five academies within two decades of the Revolution.[453] The great Lyman Beecher cautioned that illiterate preachers, "however pious, cannot command the attention of that class of community whose education and mental culture is above their own." Beecher's warning was clear: The church is in danger of retreating from the public square and any meaningful cultural relevance. Beecher would go on to challenge the establishment church to educate 8,000 new ministers. His plan was for one educated minister for every thousand Americans.[454] Beecher, Dwight, and others, despite the overwhelming sea change, rallied to the cause of rising up a new generation of educated clergy.

The shape of pastoral identity, following the American Revolution, would be a tale of two stories divided between populism and professionalism, or evangelical Protestantism and mainline Protestantism. Ministry as profession would continue to be the dominant understanding of mainline Protestant pastoral identity. This understanding would fully emerge in Niebuhr's already mentioned *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* in 1956. Niebuhr writes:

> "Whatever the function of the ministry is, theologically considered, ministers must preach, organize churches, counsel the distressed, teach the immature, and they need to be trained by practice for the exercise of these functions. Whatever the Church ought to be, it is expected of schools that they furnish men well prepared to carry on the kind of work demanded of ministers by churches as they are."[455]

Niebuhr strikes a decidedly managerial tone. He goes on to diagnose pastoral ministry in the mid-twentieth century as a "perplexed profession." It is perplexed, so writes Niebuhr, because modern parish life has become so complex:

> "Yet there is a dominant movement so that the modern Protestant church building, not to speak now of the Roman Catholic, becomes a sign of what is being done in it. What is being done is evidently a very complex thing for these many rooms of the parish house or religious education building, are designed for

[453] Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 75.
[454] Ibid., 114.
[455] Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry*, 4.

> a great number of meetings besides those of Sunday School classes and official boards."

Where then is the engine or control room for all this activity, wonders Niebuhr. Is it the sanctuary, Holy Table, pulpit, or place of prayer? All these, for Niebuhr, remain important, even essential. Yet he identities a new "architectural feature" that serves as a sign of the modern church's focal center, "The minister now has an *office* from which he directs the activities of the Church, where also he studies and does some of his pastoral counseling."[456] Notice how "studying" and "counseling" are secondary to "directing" the activities of the church. Niebuhr labeled this new kind of modern minister a "pastoral director." The legacy of Niebuhr's little book lives on, knowingly or not, with every mainline Protestant minister today.

Few today would argue that the church and world is well served by an uneducated and untrained clergy. However, many would argue that the pendulum has swung too far. Ministry, in many respects, has become too wholly defined in professional terms at the exclusion of understandings of "call" and "office." A word of caution first appeared a year after Niebuhr published *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*. In 1971, Henri Nouwen wrote a little booked called *Creative Ministry*. The introductory chapter entitled "Beyond Professionalism," laid out his concern:

> "The question that seems to come up more and more in the circles of those who want to dedicate their lives to the Christian ministry is the one that lies beyond professionalism. There is hardly a doubt any longer that being a minister calls for careful preparation, not only in terms of the knowledge and understanding of God's word but also in terms of the ministerial relationships through which God's word comes to man. Just as a doctor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and a social worker need special skills to be of real help to their fellow men, so a priest or minister will never be able to fulfill his task in a responsible way without the necessary training in the core functions of his ministry, such a preaching, teaching, caring, organizing, and celebrating. Pastoral training centers have provided many priests and ministers with the necessary professional preparation and offered them many ways to make their work more satisfying, meaningful, and effective.

[456] Ibid., 81.

> But although the main concerns of ministers over the last years have been to find a place in the row of various helping professions, the question that is brought to their minds with an increasing urgency is: 'What is there beyond professionalism—is ministry just another specialty in the many helping professions?'"[457]

In many respects, Nouwen's concern echoes the Reformation's shift from understanding "profession" as mastery of skill over the engagement in practices, and the acquisition and execution of information over the rehearsal of belief. This distinction has had the consequence of fracturing the pastor's identity. Nouwen writes, "Perhaps we have to say that one of the main reasons for the many frustrations, pains, and disappointments in the life of numerous Christian ministers is rooted in the still-growing separation between professionalism and spirituality." Nouwen takes aim at seminaries and divinity schools, "This separation is quite understandable if we look at the development of theological education during the last decade."[458] This professional-spiritual divide finds its fault line running right through the pastor's study. The professionalization of the priesthood means the pastor's study is more a flight deck than a burning bush. Here there can be no fear only competence, no retreat only advancing, and no dying only rising. Of course, what this all means is that the modern pastor is left exhausted, confused, defeated, and ultimately bored, literally to death. Richard Lischer writes, "What distinguishes a vocation from the rigors and standards of a profession is this: you have to die to enter a vocation. A profession brings out the best in you. A vocation calls you away from what you *thought* was best in you, purifies it, and promises to make you something or someone you are not yet."[459] Ultimately, the modern understanding of profession privileges the True far more, and often at the exclusion of the Beautiful. It is the loss of beauty that reduces a profession to a job, leaving the pastor "something or someone" that he or she hoped not to be.

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[457] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971), xviii-xix.
[458] Nouwen, *Creative Ministry*, xvi.
[459] Richard Lischer, *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 30.

Conclusion

Call, office, and profession, when in balance, provide the foundational metaphors for substantiating pastoral ministry as gift. Pastors receive ministry as gift as they cultivate the ability to behold and thus enter into the refining fire of God's glory. Beholding the infinitely beautiful consists in far more than observing; rather, to behold the beauty of the Triune God is transformative, producing in the believer a joy infinitely deeper and sturdier than sublimity. Jonathan Edwards, preaching a sermon on 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed," writes:

> "The glory of God does not consist merely in the creature's perceiving his perfections: for the creature may perceive the power and wisdom of God, and yet take no delight in it, but abhor it. Those creatures that so do, don't glorify God. Nor doth the glory of God consist especially in speaking of his perfections: for words avail not any otherwise than as they express the sentiment of the mind. This glory of God, therefore, consists in the creature's admiring and rejoicing and exulting in the manifestation of his beauty and excellency…The essence of glorifying…God consists, therefore, in the creature's rejoicing in God's manifestation of his beauty, which is the joy and happiness we speak of. So we see it comes to this at last: that the end of the creation is that God may communicate happiness to the creature; for if God created the world that he may be glorified in the creature, he created it that they might rejoice in his glory: for we shown that they are the same."[460]

It is fitting to follow this quote with a reflection from a pastor: John Piper writes, "But now here was the greatest mind of early America, Jonathan Edwards, saying that God's purpose for my life was that I have a passion for God's glory and that I have a passion for my joy in that glory, and that these two are one passion."[461] Ministry is a joyful gift to pastor and parish not because the pastor's work is somehow worthwhile and well done, but because it is accomplished in the light of God's glory and love. Call, office, and profession give rise to and support metaphors (both biblical and extra-biblical) that equip pastors to apprehend the beauty of God, receive ministry as gift, and to be bathed in the terrifying delight of being overcome with pure joy.

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[460] Jonathan Edwards, "Nothing Upon Earth Can Represent the Glories of Heaven," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 14, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 144.
[461] John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), 31.

METAPHOR

IV. Metaphors for Ministry

We have finally arrived at our third theme—that of *metaphor*. In sum, if we lose metaphor then everything below the literal is lost.[462] The balance of *call*, *office*, and *profession* has sustained for centuries a tradition of excellence in ministry. Out of the subsoil of *call*, *office*, and *profession* has grown a rich and diverse understanding of pastoral ministry as gift. This three-fold understanding of ordained ministry has nurtured the pastor's sense of vocation to behold and be enraptured by the glory of God, anchoring him firmly in the historic stream of the faith, and guiding him to imaginatively engage an ever-changing world. Out of this fertile ground has blossomed an abundance of images, a constellation of metaphors, each gathering together a unified account of the pastor's gifting, faithfulness to the Biblical witness, and the present and pressing needs of church and creation.[463] As demonstrated in the previous section, this three-fold model of ministry was destabilized in the 17th and 18th centuries. As a consequence, the 20th century experienced a proliferation of metaphors for ministry.[464] Over the centuries images like priest, prophet, pastor, servant, and shepherd have been the guiding metaphors for ministry. In more recent times the church has added a number of modern metaphors such as counselor, professional, life coach, political activist, and manager. We will spend time in this chapter exploring the history and scope of these metaphors, but first, let us get a better understanding of why metaphor matters.

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[462] Referring to David Brown, Trevor Hart writes, "Intelligibility and mystery…belong together, and arise together most fully and obviously in the well-crafted metaphor." See Trevor Hart, *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 81.

[463] For biblical metaphors of ministry see David W. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1993). Bennett builds on the work of Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament (*Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). Minear develops ninety-six images for the church and sixteen images that refer to leaders of the church. For extra-biblical metaphors for ministry see Donald E. Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989). Messer introduces or elucidates metaphors such as 'wounded healer,' 'servant leaders,' 'political mystic,' and 'enslaved liberators.' We will explore a selection of both biblical and extra-biblical metaphors as we make our way through the chapter.

[464] Again, see note above. There are dozens of metaphors for ministry, both biblical and extra-biblical.

The Power and Pervasiveness of Metaphor

Contrary to much contemporary belief, metaphor is a fundamental part of our way of thinking and conceiving the Creator and his creation. Christianity would be unintelligible without metaphor. For example, Origen uses the metaphor of light to express the relationship between the Son to the Father.[465] Another example would be Ambrose's use of ointment and fire to talk about the nature and relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ.[466] We will say more about metaphor and scriptures shortly. Metaphor allows us to use what we know about our physical and social experience to provide understanding of countless other realities. Metaphors can shape perceptions and actions without us ever noticing them. Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, write, "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."[467] They continue, "Metaphor is not just a matter of language, that is of mere words…on the contrary, human thought processes are largely metaphorical."[468] In other words, metaphor is a reality shaping our lives whether we acknowledge it or not. Lakoff and Johnson supply the basic example, *Argument is War*:

> Your claims are *indefensible*.
> He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
> His criticisms were right on *target*.
> I *demolished* his argument.
> I've never *won* an argument with him.
> You disagree? Okay, *shoot*!
> If you use that strategy, he'll *wipe you out*.
> He *shot down* all of my argument.[469]

Consider how this simple metaphor shapes the way we engage others in debate and disagreement. Consider then how alternate metaphors might transform or add meaning to the way we engage in these kinds of interpersonal exchanges.

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[465] Origen, from *De Principiis* (Book I, Ch.2, para. 608, pp.24-26) in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 18-20.
[466] Ambrose, from *The Holy Spirit*, in Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 26-28.
[467] Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[468] Ibid., 6.
[469] Ibid., 4.

Metaphor does not merely operate at the cognitive level but also at the aesthetic (bodily) level.[470] This is a significant part of metaphor's efficacy and pervasiveness. Metaphor does not function simply at the theoretical. It is situated at the crossroads of practice and discourse. How and why this is the case is beyond the scope of this project. For our purpose it is significant to recognize that there is a bodily-basis for metaphor.[471] The Apostle Paul, for instance, makes this explicit in a passage like Romans 12:1, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice…" (NRSV). Obviously the sacrificial imagery is an essential part of the Hebrew Bible. It is also significant for the New Testament. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Christians' sacrifice, as an example, can be "spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5) or "sacrifices of praise" (Hebrews 13:15). However, in Romans 12:1, the sacrifice we are called to offer is not praise, service, or some inward surrender, "but," as Moo writes, "our bodies themselves. It is not only what we can give that God demands; he demands the giver."[472] In this instance, Paul is using a metaphor to define the bodily nature that discipleship demands or requires. Paul has en expectation that this metaphor will be worked out in the body. So, for instance, Chrysostom writes concerning this passage, "Let the eye look on no evil thing…Let the tongue say nothing filthy…Let your hand do nothing evil…But even this is not enough...The hand must do alms, the mouth must bless those who curse it, and the ears must find time to listen to the reading of Scriptures."[473] Paul is exhorting these Roman Christians to assume, in view of God's mercies, the metaphor of living sacrifice. And in light of our larger project, Paul's phrase "by the mercies of God" is not incidental. It is possible that the preposition "by" (NRSV, ESV) can

[470] Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 106-107. For Johnson, if metaphor is central to meaning "then our account of human understanding and experience must be fundamentally an *aesthetics*—more of a 'poetics' than an epistemology." See James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 118.
[471] This language, "bodily-based", is borrowed from James K. A. Smith as referenced below.
[472] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 750.
[473] John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Romans*. PG 60 391-682.

be translated "because of" (TEV) or "in view of" (NIV). This helps to clarify that these mercies are the basis and not the means by which Paul makes his case.[474] Paul is asking these Romans Christians to reflect on and respond accordingly to the reality of inhabiting a new creation. As one comes to see or experience these mercies, existentially as well as aesthetically, the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice becomes the only logical conclusion to grace. Reflecting on the linguistic possibilities of "spiritual worship," Karl Barth's English translation of his commentary on Romans reads "veritable worship," suggesting that there is a reasonableness, truthfulness, or logic, in light of what God has accomplished in Christ, to offer oneself as a living sacrifice.[475]

Metaphor works its way all the way down. This is why Lakoff and Johnson begin their book, *Metaphors We Live By*, by stating, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action."[476] Metaphor is somehow a kind of adhesive that binds together practice and discourse—language, thought, and action. If, as Smith concludes, "metaphor is a kind of shorthand for aesthetics," then our conception of the world is "emergent, growing out of what is ultimately a body-based interaction with our environment."[477] This is why the 'liturgies' of our lives and the stories those liturgies narrate are essential to determining the constellation of metaphors that give rise to the pastor's ability to make meaning, take action, and behold beauty.[478] Metaphor not only gives definition to our lives but it also shapes our ethic. Consequently, ill-suited metaphors can lead to a crisis of identity, thought, and action. The pastor's dilemma is not only in asking, "Who am I," but also asking, "What am I to be about?" Pastors attend to the discourse and practices of their lives as a way of

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[474] Moo, *Romans*, 749.
[475] Karl Barth, *Romans*, 6th ed., trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 424.
[476] Johnson and Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3. Johnson's later book, *The Meaning of the Body*, is then an advance working out of this initial claim from *Metaphors We Live By*.
[477] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 118.
[478] Smith writes, "Human persons [are] defined by love—as desiring agents and liturgical animals whose primary mode of intending the world is love, which in turn shapes the imagination." See James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 37.

coming to terms with the metaphors that shape, reinforce, and resist certain ways of being with God and with their congregations in the world.

At the core, metaphor allows us to speak of the world, of our lives, and of God in ways otherwise off limits. Colin Gunton writes, "The metaphorical use of language is the heart of the way in which we come to speak of our world, approaching it as we do indirectly in the hope that by forcing changes in our language it will enable us to come to a measure of understanding its structures."[479] Taking it one step further—metaphorical use of language not only describes and draws out and makes sense of hidden realities, but it also has the power to create new realities, not *ex nihilo* but in the same way a painter uses color and a composer uses notes to create works of art. Metaphors not only help pastors *understand* new levels of meaning, but they also help to *create* new levels of meaning. This is what Jesus does when he calls fishermen to be "fishers of men" (Mark 1:16-20; Matthew 4:18-22), or when he encourages his followers to build not on sinking sand but solid rock (Luke 6:46-49), or when he turns a simple meal into a sign of his impending sacrifice (Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:18-20).

Paul Ricoeur writes, "The metaphorical meaning of a word is nothing which can be found in the dictionary."[480] First, metaphor is contextual, "metaphorical use must be solely contextual, that is, a meaning which emerges as the unique and fleeting result of a certain contextual action."[481] Second, metaphor is interactive. Metaphor's meaning is created between two distinct senses or entities.[482] Metaphor is on the frontier of meaning making. Henry Venema nicely lays out Ricoeur's position on metaphor:

> "Metaphorical statements are not decorative devices in which one simply substitutes one lexical meaning for another; they are genuine creations of

[479] Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 47.
[480] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 169.
[481] Ibid., 169.
[482] Ibid., 170.

> meaning that have not yet been added to the virtual system of semiotic signifiers. The production of metaphorical meaning through semantic interaction is irreducible to the dictionary meaning of its semiotic elements."[483]

So the pastor who says with Elihu from the book of Job, "Surely God is great, and we do not know him; the number of his years is unsearchable," necessarily works well beyond the "dictionary meaning of its semiotic elements."[484]

Metaphor and Theology

Without metaphor we would be at a loss to make "sense" of the world in which we live. Metaphors, says Soskice, are "reality depicting."[485] More importantly we would have no way of making "sense" of the Creator of this world. Thomas Aquinas, in book one of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, emphasizes the radical distinction between God and creature. However, that creation emanates from the life of the Trinity means that something of God's ultimate being and purpose must be communicated in and through creation.[486] Although the deficiency in human understanding has to do with sin, it has far more to do with God's majesty, the infinite gap between creature and Creator. Aquinas concludes:

> "From what we have said, therefore, it remains that the names said of God and creatures are predicated neither univocally nor equivocally but analogically, that is, according to an order or reference to something one…Thus, therefore, because we come to a knowledge of God from other things, the reality in the names said of God and other things belongs by priority in God according to His mode of being, but the meaning of the name belongs to God by posterity. And so He is said to be named from His effects."[487]

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[483] Henry Venema, *Identifying Selfhood: Imagination, Narrative, and Hermeneutics in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 81. Venema's description of Ricoeur is developed in James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 117.
[484] Job 36:26, NRSV.
[485] See Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
[486] My point, in what follows, is not to draw us in to a debate regarding *analogia entis* versus *analogia tes pisteos*. I am not debating the human capacity, or lack there-of, for comprehending the transcendent. I am simply trying to hold the tension between the analogical (similarities between God and man) and the dialectical (dissimilarities between God and man) for purposes of talking about the role of metaphor in theological discourse.
[487] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book One: God,* trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2012), 147-148.

As Alfred Freddoso comments, "For God possesses in a perfect or eminent way whatever is found in a deficient or participatory way in creatures."[488] Dorothy Sayers picks up Aquinas' argument, claiming that "all language about God must necessarily be analogical.[489] Moreover, writes Sayers, "all language about everything is analogical," and "we think in a series of metaphors."[490] None of this should surprise us, argues Sayers. That it does surprise us is further evidence of metaphor's ubiquity in our lives and language.

Sallie McFague argues that metaphor "is indigenous to Christianity, not just in the sense that it is permitted, but is called for."[491] This both makes a crucial claim about the nature of God and the nature of humanity, and the ways in which they are able to relate to one another. "Good metaphors," writes McFague, "shock, they bring unlikes together, they upset conventions, they involve tension, and they are implicitly revolutionary."[492] By this definition, metaphor refuses to allow theology to operate singularly at the level of intellectual assent. Theology is so much more than the reception, guarding, and dissemination of doctrine, as important as those tasks are. A metaphorical theology requires a more total investment of mind and heart, will and desire.[493] This is the crucial point for pastoral theology. In the pastor's training, truth (doctrine) and goodness (ethics) are often given their due without any attention to beauty. The upshot is pastors whose affections are disordered. They may 'think' and 'act' rightly and not be

[488] Alfred J. Freddoso, "Lectures on St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles I*." Lecture, University of Notre Dame, IN, October 8, 2014.
[489] Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987), 20-23. Her chapter "The Image of God" is also included in *Letters to a Diminished Church*.
[490] Dorothy Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, 25; or *The Mind of the Maker*, 23.
[491] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 14. The idea that metaphor "shocks" is linked, I believe, to the earlier discussion of beauty's ability to wound. If metaphor is that which is able to close or open the pastor to the revelation of beauty, then metaphor becomes a vehicle capable of delivering beauty's severe mercy.
[492] Ibid., 17.
[493] I have in mind Rowan William's statement, previously mentioned, that the acquisition of faith is not an exercise of the intellect or will, but rather a conversion of the imagination.

any nearer to the heart of God.[494] This, as was argued earlier, leads pastors into the despair of *acedia*—the loss of friendship with God.

Metaphor, according to McFague, has fallen on considerably hard times not only in the secular word but also within the world of religion. Absent of metaphor, religious language, argues McFague, has become deeply problematic on two levels, both the *experiential* and the *expressive* levels.[495] At the experiential level, our language is problematic, because even the most religious people live most of their lives within a disenchanted world. The so-called sacramental universe, even for people of faith, occupies an ever-smaller space. "Most of us," writes McFague, "go through the days accepting our fortunes and explaining our world without direct reference to God."[496] The danger, according to McFague is that our language becomes both *idolatrous* and *irrelevant*. It is idolatrous "because without a sense of awe, wonder, and mystery, we forget the inevitable distance between our words and the divine reality."[497] It is irrelevant "because without a sense of the immanence of the divine in our lives, we find language about God empty and meaningless."[498] In a non-sacramental universe God is neither transcendent nor immanent. Language becomes idolatrous in a non-sacramental world because it is thought capable of supplying a dictionary definition of the transcendent. And language becomes irrelevant because God is absent if not nonexistent. As religious language becomes captive to a disenchanted world, and as our experience of God becomes diminished, then our capacity to express the distance between God and our words about God is greatly reduced.

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[494] Having once again walked through the Lenten/Holy Week lectionary text I am reminded of Barbara Brown Taylor writing, "Jesus was not killed by atheism and anarchy. He was brought down by law and order allied with religion, which is always a deadly mix." Barbara Brown Taylor, "Truth to Tell," from "The Perfect Mirror," copyright 1998 Christian Century Foundation., 89-92.
[495] Ibid., 1.
[496] Ibid., 2.
[497] Ibid., 2.
[498] Ibid., 2.

What ails the pastor is not simply a lack of metaphorical language but the misappropriation of metaphor to create meaning, both as a way of approaching the glory of God and understanding his place before God—the gifted-ness of ministry. The pastor, by virtue of the constellation of modern metaphors he has assumed, is in no way immune, in a disenchanted world, from the limitations of religious language. These modern metaphors are the basis of the pastor's story. They narrate both the depth of his experience and the possible range of his expression. Alasdair MacIntyre, wrestling with the relationship of language to ethics, writes, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"[499] That story, for pastors, has had at its center ancient Scriptures proclaimed from the pulpit and enacted around the Table and Font. Again, Smith reminds us that these stories, as liturgies, include both practice and discourse:

> "Such orienting narratives are not explicitly 'told' in a 'once-upon-a-time' discursive mode—as if the body politic invites us to passively sit at the proverbial librarian's fee for 'story time' while she walks us through a picture-book narration. No, these stories are more like dramas that are enacted and performed…The Story becomes the background narrative and aesthetic orientation that habitually shapes how we constitute our world. We don't memorize the Story as told to us; we imbibe the Story as we perform it in a million little gestures."[500]

Metaphor, if it is shorthand for aesthetics, is central to 'imbibing' the grand narrative of the gospel. And this gospel narrative is more of a drama, which demands a bodily response and commitment. If metaphor, of a certain kind, does enable us to behold the glory of the Lord, then, as stated earlier in this project, this is a beauty that forces itself upon the viewer in order to transform. This implies that the gospel is not simply a story we take in to our lives to gain guidance, comfort, inspirition, or anything else; rather, it is a story that consumes us in the process of theosis.

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[499] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 250.
[500] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 109-110.

Many, but certainly not all, modern metaphors seek to move the center of God's story to something other than the gathered community performing worship. This, as McFague argues, presents the main challenge:

> The primary context, then, for any discussion of religious language is worship. Unless one has a sense of the mystery surrounding existence, of the profound inadequacy of all our thoughts and words, one will most likely identify God with our words: God becomes father, mother, lover, friend. Unless one has a sense of the nearness of God, the overwhelming sense of the way God pervades and permeates our very being, one will not find religious images significant: the power of the images for God of father, mother, lover, friend will not be appreciated. Apart from a religious context, religious language will inevitably go awry either in the direction of idolatry or irrelevancy or both."[501]

Of course, there are secular as well as religious liturgies. The option is not between worship and something other than worship.[502] We all engage in liturgical practices that rest on a narrative framework of one form or another that shapes our desire and moves us to action of a certain kind.[503] The challenge, for the pastor, is to assume metaphors for ministry that require devotion to a set of liturgical practices and linguistic possibilities that draw and challenge a congregation to consider the mysterious union of the Triune God.[504] Pastors need metaphors for ministry that cause them—and their flocks—to tremble at even the most fleeting glimpse of a holy God's terrible beauty.[505] As the author of Hebrews says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:30, NRSV).

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[501] McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 2.
[502] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 39.
[503] Ibid., 40. Smith makes the point that we are "liturgical animals because we are fundamentally desiring creatures." This is another way of saying that we are what we love, and as Smith argues, "our love is shaped, primed, and aimed by liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and aim our heart to certain ends."
[504] Curiously, post-Vatican II American Protestantism has slowly undergone sustained theological reflection and revision on its liturgical practices.
[505] It is difficult not to think of Annie Dillard's famous lines: "On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return. " Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (New York: HarperCollins, 1974).

Let me reiterate, all this talk of metaphor is unhelpful if it remains at the level of the ideal. Metaphors shape and are shaped by practices and habits within the context of being and doing church. This is to say that reflection on pastoral theology is bound up with one's ecclesiology. How the church is the church both defines and is defined by what it means to be a pastor. Nicholas Healy writes, "in general our ecclesiology in our period has become highly systematic and theoretical, focuses more upon discerning the right things to think about the church rather than orientated to the living, rather messy, confused and confusing body that the church actually is."[506] Incidentally, this is why, Healy argues, the church has "fallen prey to ever-shifting theological fashions" and why so much of the church has "become quite dull."[507] Pastors have been complicit in both of these, which means pastors are often acquiescing to the latest currents in theology and they often seem to reflect a quite tedious existence. Shortly we will more fully explore the pitfalls of the reigning metaphors for ministry, but it is enough to say here that all of these tend to focus more or even exclusively on human agency over the divine. The "concrete church," as Healy calls it, is in danger of the "ecclesiological equivalent of Nestorianism," where the church is split in to human and divine parts, or a form of Ebionism, "by thinking of the church as the product of human activity alone."[508] Again, as we will see, today's focal images for ministry reinforce both of these understandings. To be sure, the work of the church is nothing less than sociological, but it is so much more. It is deeply and thoroughly theological because it is animated by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Metaphor, rooted in classic religious language born out of scripture and tradition has a role to play in recovering a vision for God's ongoing activity in and through the church for the life of the world. As Garret Green writes this language "adheres tenaciously to the *sensus literalis* of scripture in the faith that

[506] Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5.
[507] *Ibid*.
[508] *Ibid*., 4.

only here, in these metaphoric images, does on encounter the Living God."[509] The absence of metaphor means in many cases a lost vision of the Spirit's active presence which then translates into a church fueled almost entirely by human effort.

Without the Holy Spirit, the church is not the church; the church is not the real and ongoing presence of Christ in the world. Healy sums this up, "The identity of the concrete church is not simply given; it is constructed and ever reconstructed by the grace-enabled activities of its members as they embody the church's practices, beliefs and valuations."[510] As we saw earlier, metaphors help us to both understand and create—we might say construct—new levels of meaning. And the construction or reconstruction of the church's identity is inseparable from communion with the Triune God. For the Church, this communion is expressed and experienced by way of a metaphor: a meal. As explored earlier, Lakoff and Johnson make the point that metaphor is not primarily something linguistic, but something rooted in our bodily and kinetic encounters with material reality. 'Eating' is one such 'schema'. What we 'do' communicates and constructs meaning over and above what we say about it. This meal, or supper, entails both practices and discourse. Taken together this micro-performance of the bigger gospel story creates the possibility of something new, what Paul identifies as new creation. As we consume this metaphoric meal, imaginatively and aesthetically, we are actually being consumed. Those inhabiting this metaphor, as fundamentally aesthetic or bodily-based, are participants in the new thing that the Holy Spirit is doing. As William Cavanaugh writes, "To consume the Eucharist is an act of anti-consumption, for here to consume is to be consumed, to be taken up into participation in something larger than the self, yet in a way in which the identity of the self is paradoxically secured."[511] Here metaphor offers a helpful

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[509] Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imaginations: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 206. I came to Green through Kevin Vanhoozer's work *Remythologizing Theology*.
[510] *Ibid*., 5.
[511] William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 84.

critique to an anemic ecclesiology where it is often thought that the task of the church is to pass on some closed depository of set doctrines and/or moral principals. But this would be religion without relationship. This would be a worldview and not a way of life. This would be truth and goodness without beauty.

We have already seen, through Johnson and then Smith that practice and discourse are bound together. There is a bodily basis to the metaphors that shape pastoral identity and practice. The meaning(s) that metaphor makes possible does not happen abstractly. Metaphors are not simply representational. They have a fundamental aesthetic nature, which again is not to say that aesthetics is all about beauty. Aesthetics, as we have discussed before, is more broadly about the way we humans experience, make, and create meaning. This is as true in pastoral ministry as it is in anything else. Metaphor is inseparable from the practices of leading a congregation. In my own context, as an example, I preach in a central uplifted pulpit that has eight sides. It is like a giant baptismal font, and in many ways resembles in shape but not material the actual font in our sanctuary. The practice of climbing in to the pulpit-font week after week, Sunday after Sunday, has a way of shaping not only the message but also my understanding of what it means to be a pastor. The pulpit-font is not simply a reminder but also the vehicle by which the Holy Spirit, as a work of grace, enables the preaching to exist as something other than a lecture or teaching time. The preaching becomes sacramental, or as Hauerwas writes, "it is not the preacher who makes the sermon efficacious. To think that would be but the form of *ex operator operans* [sic] applied to the preached word. Rather, for the preached word to be God's word the Holy Spirit must make us a body of people capable of hearing that word rightly."[512] This is made possible, in part, as the metaphor is enacted, rehearsed, and inhabited. In light of this metaphor connecting baptism and preaching the paradox of Paul's "living sacrifice" as

[512] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 60.

central to an understanding of pastoral ministry is something I work out weekly through the drama of worship.

Discourse and practice are impoverished in much of North American Christianity. As stated earlier in the project, the traditional furniture of worship has been removed in favor of fog machines and strobe lights. Spontaneous prayers from the heart have replaced timeworn liturgies born out of thoughtfulness and faithfulness. Carefully worded manuscripts are dispensed with so that pastors can "connect" with an "audience." And often the most valued quality or characteristic of a pastor is not that they be holy or wise, but that they be authentic. Lots of effort, practice, and resources in the way of language, wardrobe, mannerisms, and delivery go in to the authentication of pastoral ministry. This current version of authenticity is incredibly self-referential. The underlying assumption is that somehow the most important person a congregation needs to connect with is the pastor. It is beyond the scope of this project to play out all the implications of this. Nevertheless, it is conspicuous that the reigning metaphors for ministry reinforce and potentially give rise to a way of being pastor that places human agency into the spotlight while the divine is left in the wings. And practice and discourse participate in giving these metaphors their power.

We not only live but also often worship in a disenchanted time and space where the greatest thing to behold is the prowess and performance of a highly skilled and gifted pastor. To continue with the preaching theme, many modern metaphors for ministry no longer sustain kerygmatic preaching, by which I mean the proclamation of the good news of the gospel: The kingdom of God, in Jesus Christ has drawn near (Matthew 3:1), and this kingdom promises good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release of the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). Kerygma keeps the person and work of Jesus Christ at the center of the proclamation. Modern metaphors for ministry shift the focus away from God's kingdom to national kingdoms, individual kingdoms, and

kingdoms of consumer choices. It is not that God has gone missing so much as God is on the periphery of the proclamation. So, for instance, the pastor as political activist runs the risk of placing the State above the Kingdom of God. Consequently, the sermon will be a call to arms without a prior call to repentance (Matthew 3:2). Or the pastor as therapist will be concerned with the sickness and not the sinfulness of his flock.[513] The preaching will tend to be therapeutic, topical, and "relevant." The upshot is that metaphors inform our understanding about God, they inform our understanding about pastoral ministry, and they inform our understanding of worship. For example, is worship a political rally or is it an entertainment venue.[514] The pastor—equipped and shaped by modern metaphors—becomes our guru, life coach, educator and therapist.[515] The pastor adopts these metaphors because he or she is formed by liturgies—knowingly or not—that shape desire by revealing that which is to be prized above all else.[516] All of these tend to render pastors less an "ikon" in the classic Christian sense and more an "icon" in the popular sense.

A reductionist ecclesiology, where the church is the guardian and purveyor of doctrine and moral principles, where sociology and theology do not meet or where theology makes little or no appearance, and where pastors are valued

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[513] Again, this tracks back to James K. A. Smith's distinction between sin and sickness. *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 106-109.

[514] A detailed historical account of the move from worship space to entertainment venue is given by Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[515] It seems that both so-called liberals and evangelicals have suffered the loss of what McFague calls "religious language." Curiously, I wonder if this loss has contributed to the renewed interest among young evangelicals for liturgy and for a sense of mystery—the sacramental—among mainline Protestants. Robert Webber's *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals are Attracted to the Liturgical Church* (New York: Morehouse, 1985) serves as the first in a long line of spiritual pilgrimages by evangelicals seeking "religious language," among other things, that helps them probe the mysterious beyond their own oppressively boring felt needs. On the mainline Protestant side, I think of an author like Marilynne Robinson, not incidentally a Presbyterian, whose books about the fictional town of Gilead are infused with sacramentality.

[516] Geoffrey Wainwright defines worship as having an 'upwards' and 'forwards' motion: "I see Christian worship, doctrine and life as conjoined in a common 'upwards' and 'forwards' direction towards God and the achievement of his purpose, which includes human salvation. They intend God's praise. His glory is that he is already present and within to enable our transformation into his likeness, which means participation in himself and his kingdom." Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 10.

most for their authenticity is an ecclesiology deficient in metaphor(s) of a certain kind. Here the beauty of God is not apprehended, worship is disenchanted, the goal of the Christian life is to be right and/or good, communion is lost or diminished, and worship is robbed of the likely possibility of a dangerous encounter with God and his mission in the world. One of Healy's main critiques of Hauerwas is that his ecclesiology is lacking in divine agency, "Hauerwas's ecclesiocentric account inadequately relates the church to God."[517] Healy appears to accuse Hauerwas of a form of ecclesiastical Pelagianism, "[Hauerwas] acknowledges the church's sinfulness and confusion, and responds to it by insisting that the church should try harder…the church requires effort, and his task is to encourage and exhort it to greater effort in the right direction."[518] I am not sure that right theology is marked by the degree of effort put in to being and doing church. Still, Healy's point is well taken. The question centers on whose shoulders does the building of the church rest. I think if we were to climb under the hood of the car, so to speak, we would find metaphors for the church that reinforce the priority of human over divine agency. And I would suggest that Healy's critique of Hauerwas translates to pastoral ministry as well.

Finally, let me make explicit what has already been implicit in this current section. It would be a mistake to say that metaphor only gives us something to say about God. As alluded to already, metaphor also gives us something to say about ourselves. Metaphor powerfully shapes the pastor's self-image in light of what it reveals about God. Metaphor fills the human longing for both knowledge of God and self. Metaphor, in a sense, "tunes" the truth of this knowledge of God and self. One test, for the pastor, of metaphor's truthfulness is whether or not it sets up an infinite gap—traversed only by means of grace—between the glory of God and the finitude and fickleness of humanity.[519] It is this gap between the majesty

[517] Nicholas M. Healy, *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 131.
[518] *Ibid*. I think it is often forgotten or given little consideration that Hauerwas was born, raised, and in many ways remains a Methodist.
[519] Here I am thinking of Calvin's first discussion in his *Institutes* on the "Knowledge of God the Creator." Calvin speaks of how the knowledge of "God and man" goes hand in hand. The fulcrum of this relationship is the "majesty of God." Calvin, *Institutes*, I.I.1-3.

of God and the created-ness and fallen-ness of humanity that sees ministry, let alone life, primarily as gift. Metaphor is what establishes, creates, and elucidates this dynamic between the nature of God and man. As a result, metaphor establishes the terms of this relationship between God and man. For example, metaphor not only gives us something to say *about* God, but it also gives us something to say *to* God.[520] And our first word, in view of the majesty of God, is a word of doxology that joins an ongoing anthem of creation's praise. Similarly, and as already stated, metaphor not only helps us understand the nature of God but also understand our nature in relationship to the character and saving-activity of God. So, for example, Thomas Aquinas, in a conversation on Christ's transfiguration, sees Christ's "resplendent clothes" as a metaphor for the saints in their "future splendor in eschatological union with Christ."[521] Metaphors, as they relate the majesty and beauty of God, shape our understanding not only of who the pastor is, but also of who the pastor is to become all in the light of gift. Ultimately, metaphor is a kind of dialogue between God and the pastor, and it is dialogue—as an act of communication—that establishes and is at the heart of relationship. More than reality, metaphor creates communion—or common life.

Metaphors for Ministry in the New Testament

As we have seen, the church is no stranger to metaphor. The church has always drawn on metaphors both biblical and extra-biblical. Donald Messer writes:

> "Images for ministry are never static; the search for contemporary expressions always persists in every culture and era. Our time is no different. Stereotypes cluster around certain images so that new generations seek to abandon dead metaphors in hopes of finding more dynamic ways of conceiving of themselves and their service."[522]

Metaphors form the church's understanding about God, its pastoral ministry, and its ecclesiology.[523] Metaphors of ministry are deeply rooted in the classic

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[520] Metaphors, for instance, are central to the psalmist's prayers. Also, and as one example, Augustine uses metaphors such as "happiness," "wisdom," and "light" in his prayers of praise to God. See Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 30.
[521] Ibid., 90. Thomas Aquinas, from *Summa Theologiae, The Life of Christ* (3a. 38-45).
[522] Messer, *Contemporary Images*, 45.
[523] The point in question for this project is that measuring the effectiveness or lifespan of a metaphor is determined by how well it contributes to the cultivation the pastor's ability to behold the glory of God. It

Christian tradition, and more importantly, within the biblical witness. Consequently, the earliest and most lasting images find their basis in both Scripture and Tradition—images like "servant" (Gr *doulos*, 1 Peter 2:16; Gal 1:10; Phil 2:22; Col 4:12; 2 Tim 2:24; Mt 20:27), "messenger" (Gr *euanggelistes*, Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5), and "ambassador" (Gr *hyper hou presbeuo*, Eph 6:20; 2 Cor 5:20). The oldest and most enduring metaphor for ministry is *shepherd*, after all, this is what the word *pastor* means.

Shepherd is by far the dominant and focal image for much of classic pastoral theology. Commenting on John 21:15-19, John Chrysostom writes:

> "The Master asked the disciple if he loved him, not to learn the truth—why should he, who lives in all men's hearts?—but to teach us how much he cares for the supervision of these flocks…He did not want to prove then how much Peter loved him (which was already clear to us from many pieces of evidence), but he wanted Peter and all of us to learn how much he loves his own Church, in order that we too might show great concern for the same thing."[524]

For Chrysostom, and the rest of the classic tradition, the association of *pastor* with *shepherd* demonstrates the high calling assigned to the priestly ministry. To be called a *pastor* or *shepherd* is to assume continuity in mission and purpose with the great shepherd, Jesus Christ.[525] Christian ministry, the church has maintained, is an extension of Christ's own ministry. Moreover, for the pastor to express or carry out the heart of God they must naturally be near the heart of God—intimately, intensely, and intentionally involved with Jesus the chief shepherd. This is the dynamic at work between Jesus and Peter on the lakeshore. This is what Chrysostom is trying to communicate with all seriousness when he writes, "I am afraid that if I receive the flock of Christ plump and well-fed and then damage it through ineptitude I may provoke against me God who so loved it that he gave himself for its salvation."[526] Pastoral ministry is

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goes without saying that there are many other ways of determining whether a metaphor/image should live or die.

[524] Quoted in Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*,43.

[525] Ps 23:1, 100:3; Isa 40:11; Eze 34:15; Mt 9:36, 26:31; Lk 15:4; Jn 10:7, 11, 15; Heb 13:20; 1 Pe 5:4, 2:25)

[526] Purves, *Pastoral Theology*, 44.

serious business precisely because it is shepherding in the way of Jesus—"as the Father sent me, so I send you"—and as Jesus' real and ongoing presence in the world—"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them..." (John 20:21,22).

Gregory of Nazianzus' lasting influence extends well beyond Trinitarian theology. Less known, but no less important is his contribution to pastoral theology. His writings and ideas of pastoral ministry would shape, for hundreds of years, important pastoral theologians like John Chrysostom, Pope Gregory the Great, the Reformer Martin Bucer, and the Puritan Richard Baxter. Gregory writes *to* pastors:

> "The scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it abides, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, or restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit: and, in short, to deify, and bestow heavenly bliss upon, one who belongs to the heavenly host."[527]

Reminiscent of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Gregory asserts the pastor's art is to provide the soul with wings, to enable flight from the place where God is not to the place where God is.[528] The resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples, sending them as he was sent, with the wounds in his hands and side, twice saying, "Peace/shalom be with you" (John 20:19, 21). The pastor's "art" is a God-given responsibility or calling to seek the welfare of his flock. Nicholas Wolterstorff writes, "Responsible action is the vocation of man, shalom is his end."[529]

Gregory, still employing the metaphor of shepherd, turns now to another metaphor—the pastor as *physician of the souls*. He calls pastoral care "the art of

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[527] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 2.22, Purves, 9. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989)
[528] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Stephen Scully (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2003), 27, 32,73-74, 80.
[529] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 79. Of course, Wolterstorff is speaking more formally about "artists" in the modern sense. However, his definition of artists as a skilled craftsman put on the "stage of existence by God, there to do his or her work of making and selecting so as to bring forth something of benefit and delight to other human beings, something in acknowledgement of God" is easily translatable to our discussion of pastoral ministry (91).

arts."[530] Andrew Purves writes, "According to Gregory, the pastor is a healer, even more so than the physician, for the pastor treats a sickness that is a deeply subtle foe of healing, a sickness of the soul."[531] The reason, Purves quotes Gregory, is that the pastor is concerned with "the diagnosis and cure of our habits, passions, lives, wills, and whatever else is within us, by banishing from our compound nature (body and soul) everything brutal and fierce, and introducing and establishing in their stead what is gentle and dear to God."[532] Again, as with *shepherd*, the metaphor of *physician* is rooted in the person and work of Jesus (Mark 2:17).

The New Testament never uses the words 'leader' or 'leadership.' That is not to say that the New Testament is indifferent to developing leaders for the fledgling Jesus movement. What the New Testament does offer, in regards to leadership development, is not a system but a series of metaphors. Jesus alone uses around thirty metaphors.[533] These images include those already mentioned plus metaphors such as 'brother,' 'sister,' 'servant,' 'salt,' 'child,' 'guest of the bridegroom,' 'witness,' and 'manager.' Paul, Peter, and other NT writers pick up and develop these metaphors while introducing their own—'ambassador,' 'soldier,' 'saints,' 'teacher,' and 'athlete.'[534] Within the biblical witness, these metaphors appear with differing frequency. These ancient metaphors—and groupings of metaphors—are the subsoil that give rise to new and appropriate metaphors that cultivate the pastor's ability to behold the beauty of God in any age.

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[530] Purves, *Pastoral Theology*, 17, Oration 2.16.
[531] Ibid., 17.
[532] Ibid., 17. From *Oration* 2.18.
[533] David Bennett, *Metaphors for Ministry*, 13.
[534] Ibid., 15-16. As Bennett mentions, Paul Minear (1960) suggests ninety-six biblical images for the church, and sixteen images that refer to church leaders. Minear groups these metaphors according to four 'master' images: people of God, new creation, fellowship of faith, and body of Christ. Hans Kung (1967) groups images according to 'People of God,' 'Creation of the Spirit,' and 'Body of Christ.' We have already mentioned the earliest grouping of foundational metaphors—calling, office, profession.

Modernity's Uneasy Relationship with Metaphor

To say that metaphor describes and creates reality is to invite critique and suspicion. Despite the power and pervasiveness of metaphor in our lives, modernity has been reluctant to acknowledge its existence except as a figure of speech used by authors to make clever comparisons. Lakoff and Johnson give us a window into the modern discomfort with metaphor:

> "The fear of metaphor and rhetoric in the empiricist tradition is a fear of subjectivism—a fear of emotion and the imagination."
>
> And at the other end of the spectrum,
>
> "The Romantic tradition, by embracing subjectivism reinforced the dichotomy between truth and reason, on the one hand, and art and imagination, on the other. By giving up on rationality, the Romantics played into the hands of the myth of objectivism whose power has continued to grow."[535]

Metaphor, but certainly not metaphor alone, posed a threat to the idea that reality is primarily determined by human rationality. Consequently, the objectivist claimed there was no bridge between imagination and reason, and the subjectivist burned the bridge down. Somewhat surprisingly, given the important and obvious use of metaphor in Scripture, this is as true for the church as it is for the broader culture. It is a curious phenomenon, punctuated in North America by the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the early twentieth century, which privileged, among both progressives and conservatives, a theology and apologetics based on an empirical epistemology. As a result, metaphors in Scripture simply became expressions of human experiences rather than, as Gunton writes, "means by which we speak about the reality of God."[536] Metaphor's move to experience, for evangelicals as well as mainline liberals, privatized the faith in such a way as to, among other things, destabilize the pastor's sense of calling and character. The pastor was no longer in a conversation with God and the body of Christ; rather, he was in a conversation with people and how they felt, perceived, and experienced both God and a commodity called religion.

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[535] Johnson and Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By*, 191-192.
[536] Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement*, 42.

The modern suspicion of metaphor can be traced to the Enlightenment.[537] Modern rationalism—growing out of the seeds of a medieval natural law theory—became increasingly optimistic about the capacity for individuals to rectify their own fallenness. John Locke wrote,

> "I am bold to think that morality is capable of demonstration…since the precise real essence of the things moral words stand for may be perfectly known, and so the congruity and incongruity of the things themselves be perfectly discovered: in which consists perfect knowledge" (Essay III.xi.16).[538]

Immanuel Kant was far less optimistic. Kant had a robust notion of evil and a less favorable view of humanity's moral compass. However, where Kant follows the Enlightenment trajectory is to say that God deals with evil not through the particular historic event of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross, but rather God is at work redeeming the world through human reason.[539] Jesus does not effect our salvation but demonstrates its potential for every human moral agent. Gunton describes this as a modern form of Pelagianism. In light of Kant, metaphor is not so much abandoned, as it is unneeded. The pre-modern understanding of metaphor as enabling finite minds to gain greater understanding of the transcendent becomes completely unnecessary. For some this meant that God was not utterly transcendent. For others, this meant humanity's potential for acquiring knowledge was unlimited.

Something slightly different occurs with the arrival of Schleiermacher. For his part, Schleiermacher saw language not as a way of understanding but as a way of expression. Gunton writes that Schleiermacher "has produced a strongly

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[537] James K. A. Smith speaks about the secular ages move from sin to sickness. What was formerly sin is now sickness: "The moral is transferred to a therapeutic register; in doing so we move from responsibility to victimhood." Sickness, unlike sin, does not imply imperfection. To make his point, Smith quotes Charles Taylor, "One reason to throw over the spiritual perspective evil/holiness was to reject the idea that our normal, middle-range existence is imperfect [essential ot the 'spiritual' account]. We're perfectly all right as we are, as 'natural' beings. So the dignity of ordinary, 'natural' existence is even further enhanced." James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 107.
[538] Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement*, 4
[539] Ibid., 5.

subjectivist interpretation of traditional doctrines, so that their meaning is realized more in the experience of the Christian than with reference to the historical incarnation and cross. As in the case of Kant, they are more to do with something that happens within us than with the redeeming initiative of a free and transcendent God."[540] Timothy George puts it in a slightly different way:

> "The father of modern hermeneutics, Schleiermacher defined religion as the feeling of absolute dependence and understood Scripture as a detailed expression of the faith that satisfies our need to feel a sense of absolute dependence. With this subjective account of the meaning of Scripture, Schleiermacher displaced the central teaching and dogmas of the Church, putting in its place a phenomenology of Christian self-consciousness."[541]

In light of this view, metaphor says less about the transcendent than it does about the projection of the self. Scripture is not, in this sense, a way of knowing what is beyond our finitude; rather, it is about the expression of our inward needs, desires, and wants. For Enlightenment thinkers, many of whom were sympathetic to the Christian faith, the traditional language of Scripture and theology, particularly images, became an embarrassment. Therefore, the goal was to make the Christian tradition credible in a world ever impressed with and convinced of its potential for advancement and progress apart from the revelation and redemption of a particular Three-Person God. Any recovery of the classic metaphorical language within scripture and tradition has been challenging in part because of an anxiety of what Vanhoozer calls "Feuerbachian slips."[542] As he explains, "for Feuerbach, religion is a system of projection whereby some aspect or image of the human self is magnified and then externalized onto a god-figure. He thought this tendency to be most pronounced in Christianity, not least because of the centrality of the Incarnation."[543] Strong currents within the church, which have been apprehensive of these so-called "slips," have tended to abandon metaphor altogether, or so they have thought. Ironically, in light of what

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[540] Ibid., 15.
[541] Timothy George, "Reading the Bible with the Reformers: We Ought to Read Scripture the Way Luther and Calvin Did," *First Things* (March, 2011).
[542] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.
[543] *Ibid*.

we have been saying, this is simply the path along which the church, and its leadership, have found themselves captive, if unwittingly, to the reigning metaphors for ministry.

The damage to metaphor, among many other things, was done. As a consequence, failing to apprehend the beauty of God, the reality of ministry as gift began to be lost. Pastoral identity was to move forward unaided by the classic metaphors of pastoral theology. The modern world, including a thoroughly modern church, promised to liberate pastors from the metaphorical and imaginative use of language. They were no longer needed. In fact, they were only confusing, even misleading. However, rather than jettisoning metaphor altogether, pastors were unknowingly assuming metaphors that focused ministry in new ways. Unfortunately, this left clergy without an essential tool for grasping the revelation of an ineffable God, or, for that matter, anything that could be described as a 'mystery' or anything beyond a literal definition. The loss of metaphor also left pastors without the necessary tool for understanding their *calling*, *office*, and *profession* before God. Moreover, it left them without the language for communicating the heart of the gospel to an increasingly disenchanted world. And this confusion, sadly enough, has led to the pastor's captivity to, ironically, a constellation of modern metaphors that lead the pastor ever further away from cultivating the ability to apprehend the beauty of God.

Captivity to Modern Metaphors

Since Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), clergy in the West have fared relatively well. This is not to say that the work has always been easy. It seems anything, when done well and as it should, has its particular set of challenges, difficulties, even dangers. It is just to say that for most of the church's history the Medicis were quite pleased to have their sons be bishops, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith were delighted that little Johnny was the senior pastor of

First Church on Main Street.[544] Somewhere along the way, pastors traded prison cells for palaces, house-churches for cathedrals, indictments for diplomas, and profanities for honorifics. In post-war America, the ideal mainline pastor was a friend and counselor to leading civic and business leaders, resided in a manse in a suitably leafy neighborhood, had his office in the church spire overlooking prime city real estate, enjoyed a membership at the local country club, and was educated at the appropriate institutions "back East" in order to learn how to sift out and explain away all the potentially embarrassing myths and mysteries of the Christian faith.

Evangelical ministers had their pride of place as well. The twentieth century was particularly good to them. Through the likes of Billy Graham and Oral Roberts evangelicals appealed to the masses and added thousands, millions worldwide, to their ranks.[545] They reigned supreme in tent meetings, over the airwaves, and eventually through the television. If mainline pastors presided over Main Street, then the evangelicals reigned everywhere else.

The public perception of pastors, both mainline and evangelical, has dramatically changed over the last several decades. Between 1973 and 1997 the public's confidence in religious leaders and institutions has fallen precipitously. By 1997 only twenty-four percent of Americans between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four expressed confidence in clergy. In 2004 a poll showed that fifty-six percent of the U.S. population rated pastors as "very high" or "high" in ethics and honesty. This might seem high until compared with other professions. Nurses

[544] By no stretch of the imagination am I suggesting that there was a several hundred-year golden age of pastoral ministry. Christendom did not guarantee an easy life for the priesthood, either at the hands of the State or the Church. Priest in every age have been persecuted for their belief and their mission. I make the simple point that up until fairly recently the priestly office was understood to have a place of privilege in the public square, even if at times unwanted by some.

[545] For a recent in depth look at the life of Billy Graham see Grant Wacker's, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014). In the opening pages Wacker unpacks the difficult to understand success of Graham, "Graham's story sheds light on the formation of a moral vocabulary that expressed the grievances and aspirations of millions of people. Graham's voice helped guide that process. And most important, his story reveals the influences of religion, especially evangelical religion, on larger trends in culture" (5).

were at seventy-nine percent, military officers at seventy-two percent, and physicians at sixty-seven percents.[546] It is not surprising then that while starting in very different places, evangelical and mainline pastors have ended up in similar positions—outside looking in.

The populism and revivalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth century drove a wedge in American Protestantism, creating a tale of two stories. Evangelical Protestantism was marked by both an aggressive advancement on one front and a stunning retreat on another. It was a kind of scorched earth policy of the American religious landscape. Mainline Protestants, for their part, remained at the table; however, they capitulated to modern sensibilities. Their role was no longer to speak God's Word of wisdom and redemption into the world's affairs, but to offer generic prayers of affirmation to open and close public meetings. Where the evangelicals were gaining in numbers, mainline churches were seeing fewer and fewer people in the pews. From 1970-2000 the seven largest mainline denominations each lost two to three million members, facing membership losses every year.[547]

Pastors know it, congregations experience it, and popular culture is all too eager and delighted to display the modern pastor's more embarrassing, yet sadly all too true, caricatures.[548] Ironically, it is the pastor's desire to be relevant and modern—not traditional or old-fashioned—that has reinforced these caricatures. Undoubtedly, clergy in the twenty-first century are having something of an identity crisis. An increasingly modern and postmodern world that has democratized, privatized, sanitized, and demythologized anything remotely to do with Jesus has little use for a calling that is kerygmatic at its core. To avoid

[546] Carroll, *God's Potters*, 15-16. Carroll also notes that confidence was falling in most all professions, not just clergy.
[547] Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 312.
[548] A recent example is James Norton, who plays a Church of England clergyman on *Grantchester*, suggesting that popular media does not take clergy, church, and religion seriously enough. See *The Telegraph*, "Grantchester star James Norton criticizes trend for faith being portrayed as 'exorcisms' and cults,'" 22 April 2017, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/22/grantchester-star-james-norton-criticises-trend-faith-portrayed/.

embarrassment pastors have given up the language of faith, they have restricted God's Kingdom to the boundaries of the human heart, and they have assumed models of ministry that are more interested in relevancy than faithfulness. We now turn to examine three of those metaphors: therapist, celebrity, CEO.

In 1925, Anton Boisen was serving as a hospital chaplain in Worcester, Massachusetts. Boison began to invite ministerial students to join him on the psychiatry ward. At the same time, Richard Cabot, a physician at the Harvard Medical School wrote "A Plea for a Clinical Year in the Course of Theological Study."[549] In 1936, the Association of Theological Schools recommended that every student training for ministry undergo a year of clinical pastoral education.[550] The idea was that ministers needed more than theological training to exercise pastoral care. The tacit concern was that ministers, without clinical pastoral training, would be in danger of a sort of pastoral malpractice. By the mid-twentieth century, if not before, the "pastor as therapist" had arrived. From Riverside Church in New York City, the famous Harry Emerson Fosdick declared preaching as "counseling on a group scale." He would write, "A good minister cannot now escape personal counseling…It's in the air."[551] A common criticism of Fosdick is uncharitably echoed in one fellow Baptist preacher, writing that "there is little in the theology of preaching for Fosdick that anchors it in any of the eternals: God, Jesus Christ, the Bible. The definition of preaching he has given could well be the job description of a clinical psychologist."[552]

Pastoral care, at an astounding rate, became disconnected from its classic sources and beholden to modern psychotherapy. In a survey of writings by pastoral theologians of the nineteenth century—Shedd (1879), Fairbairn (1875), Hoppin (1884), Bridges (1829), Koestlin (1895), Gladden (1891), and Kiddler

[549] Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 233.
[550] Edward E. Thornton, *Professional Education for Ministry: A History of Clinical Pastoral Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 62.
[551] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "The Minister and Psychotherapy," *Pastoral Psychology* 11 (1960): 13; Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 242.
[552] Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 339.

(1871)—there exists 314 references to the classic pastoral authors, men like Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Herbert. In less than a century, the most popular pastoral theologians cited no classic pastoral texts. Instead, these twentieth century authors—Hiltner, Clinebell, Oates, Wise, Tournier, Stollberg, and Nuttin—referenced modern psychotherapists 330 times. The legacy is a twentieth and twenty-first century pastor who knows more of Freud, Jung and Rogers than Gregory, Cyprian, or Baxter.[553] Holifield captures the rise of pastor as therapist,

> "No topic created more interest after the was than pastoral counseling. In 1939 seminaries offered few courses, but by the 1950s almost every seminary had at least one counseling course and more than 80 percent provided courses in psychology. Observers of the schools concluded that the 'new emphases in psychology and pastoral counseling' had produced a momentous 'turn in the education of the ministry.' Countless theology students and ministers learned the techniques of the therapist Carl Rogers, whose theory of 'client-centered therapy' urged counselors to avoid advice-giving. For some clergy, the proper style of counseling was now a non-directive listening that enabled parishioners to discern their own path."[554]

Pastoral counseling, or caring for souls, did not originate in the twentieth century. The church has always affirmed that the care of souls is at the heart of a historic understanding of pastoral ministry. However, the therapeutic impulses of the twentieth century, coupled with professionalization and secularization, nearly silenced the classic tradition.

One of the forgotten treasures of pastoral writings was Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*. In it he admonishes pastors:

> "We must be ready to give advice to inquires, who come to us with cares of conscience; especially the great care which the Jews put to Peter, and the jailer to Paul and Silas, 'What must we do to be saved (Acts 16:31)?' A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counselor for their souls, as the physician is for their bodies, and the lawyer for their estates: so that each man who is in doubts and straits, may bring his case to him for resolution; as Nicodemus came to Christ, and as it was usual with the people of old to go to the

[553] Thomas C. Oden, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 29-31.
[554] E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983) 270, 300; Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 242.

> priest, 'who must keep knowledge, and at whose mouth they must ask the law, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts' (Mal 2:7)."[555]

Since Baxter, a fundamental change occurred in the way souls are cared for. People stopped asking 'What must I do to be saved,' and started asking the thoroughly modern, maybe more uniquely American question, 'What must I do to be happy.' Pastors, desiring to be truly helpful and relevant, did not risk correcting the question, but instead relented and sought out modern psychotherapy for the right answers. The move to *therapist* was nearly complete. The final step necessitated a shift in anthropology: No longer were people primarily bearers of the image of God, but instead rational autonomous individuals endowed with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This dramatically shifted what it meant to be fully human. Cut free from the *imago dei*, identity struggled to make sense of itself in a changing and raging sea of wants, desires, longings, and needs. Thus was born the modern therapeutic culture in which pastors have been a bit too eager to serve as highly trained religious mental health professionals. The upshot is pastors as therapists who have become far more skilled at diagnosing neuroses than beholding the glory of God, let alone helping others to behold the glory of God.

Oprah Winfrey launched her new OWN television network with a star-studded lineup of interviews. The list includes movie mogul Steven Spielberg, teenage singing sensation Justin Bieber, NBA superstar Lebron James, and the first family of reality TV the Kardashians. Remarkably, finding a place among this scintillating group are two pastors, incidentally both Texans. The first is Bishop T.D. Jakes pastor of the Dallas based 30,000 member Potter's House. The second is Pastor Joel Osteen whose Houston area Lakewood Church is a converted sports arena. The choir alone, at 450 members, more than doubles the attendance of the average American Sunday church service. Telling enough, Osteen was deemed worthy to be Oprah's second interview from the first season, right behind the decades-long rocker Steven Tyler.

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[555] Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor, 1657* (Louisville: Legacy Publications, 2012) 31.

> Oprah begins, "I was reading some of the critics, and I was thinking, why would anyone criticize you for preaching prosperity, because what kind of God wants you to be poor and miserable?"
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> "That's how I feel," Osteen enthusiastically responds. "I can't be a blessing to others if I'm poor, broke, and depressed and I don't feel good about myself."[556]

Historian of American Christianity, Kate Bowler, writes, "Joel Osteen has certainly mastered the art of spiritual self-esteem. The man known as the "smiling preacher" leads the largest church in America. He crisscrosses the country with his wife, Victoria, leading packed conferences dubbed 'A Night of Hope.' His books—*Your Best Life Now*, *Become a Better You*, and *Every Day a Friday*—climbed the best-seller lists, and an estimated seven million viewers tune into his weekly television broadcast. Joel Osteen is not only America's most-watched religious figure but also one of the most powerful representatives of a new kind of pastor: the celebrity pastor and reality star."[557] Osteen may have perfected the art of celebrity, but if truth be told the roots of this metaphor are almost as old as this young nation. Long before Osteen there were men like George Whitefield—a Calvinist, mentored by the Wesley brothers, and ordained an Anglican. In 1739, Whitefield set out for a preaching tour of the American colonies. He began in Philadelphia where no church was large enough to hold the crowds, so he moved outside, preaching to 8,000 or more every night. The most famous English actor of the time, David Garrick, remarked, "I would give a hundred guineas, if I could say 'Oh' like Mr. Whitefield."[558]

Perhaps the first true celebrity of American religious history was the nineteenth century pastor Henry Ward Beecher. Debby Applegate, in her Pulitzer-prize

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[556] Interview aired on OWN, 1 August 2012.
[557] Kate Bowler, "The Celebrity Pastor & The Divinity Student," *DIVINITY Magazine* Fall (2012): 17-18. Vol 12 no 1. For a comprehensive history of the celebrities of the prosperity gospel, see Kate Bowler's new and well-received *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). She recounts the reason for the rise of figures like Joel Osteen and his 38,000 member church, T. D. Jakes dubbed by *Time* one of America's most influential leaders, Creflo Dollar who pastors the 30,000 member Atlanta World-Changer's Church, Frederick Price, Joyce Meyer, and Rod Parsley (5).
[558] Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 237.

winning biography dubbed Beecher not just the most famous preacher in America but *The Most Famous Man in America*.[559] Beecher's father, Lyman Beecher, was one of the great Puritan Divines, a Presbyterian minister, graduate of Yale, leader in the Second Great Awakening, and founder of the American Bible Society. Henry Ward Beecher was one of seven sons, all pastors, and three daughters. His sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote the century's bestselling book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Beecher abandoned the stern Calvinist orthodoxy of his father. In 1867 Ralph Waldo Emerson remarked, "Beecher told me that he did not hold one of the five points of Calvinism in a way to satisfy his father."[560] Following a commencement speech asking the question "What is the end and purpose of life?" a local newspaper wrote, "We think we are safe in saying that Mr. Beecher considered this end to be the doing of good, rather than the being of good."[561] Beecher served as the pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, and was so popular among locals and tourist that ferries from Manhattan to Brooklyn were playfully called "Beecher Boats." Following the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln invited Beecher to speak at the raising of the Union flag at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, the site where the war began.[562] As in many cases, it would take a scandal to demonstrate Beecher's true star power. Foreshadowing the fall of many of America's religious celebrities, Beecher was caught up in an alleged infidelity. In 1872 the wronged husband took Beecher to court. Applegate states that Beecher's trial became the most widely covered event of the nineteenth century, "garnering more newspaper headlines than the entire Civil War."[563]

Beecher's brand of theology—unconditional love and unbounded optimism—would become central in shaping American Christianity, leading the way for a long line of pastors as celebrities, men like Norman Vincent Peale and his "Power of positive thinking," Robert Schuller and his "Turn your scars into stars,"

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[559] Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America*.
[560] Ibid., 11.
[561] Ibid., 11.
[562] Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America*, intro.
[563] Ibid.

and now Joel Osteen's "Your best life now." Pastor as celebrity is one of the most dominant metaphors of the last hundred years. Scores of pastors have assumed the mantle of celebrity. Some of them, like Sinclair Lewis' fictional rascal *Elmer Gantry*, have sought it out at terrible cost. Others though, have found themselves unintentionally anointed by an American public addicted to its cult of personalities. *Pastor as celebrity* is often coupled with *church as entertainment.* The visible signs of this marriage of metaphors can be seen, to varying degrees, in almost every American Protestant denomination. Take for instance developments in church architecture, where the traditional American colonial or neo-gothic buildings have been replaced with concert-like auditoriums. In many ways the buildings serve to reinforce the pastor's role as celebrity. An early twentieth century example would be Adah Robinson's stunning 1929 art deco Boston Avenue United Methodist Church.[564] Still rich in Christian symbols, Boston Avenue's theatre style seating in the round, where all lines in the sanctuary lead to the pulpit, creates as its focal point not the cross, font or table, but the prince of the pulpit.[565] As these twentieth century metaphors took hold, Christian symbols receded altogether. So, for example, if one were to step inside the quintessential boomer-generation church, Willow Creek in suburban Chicago, there is no sign of the cross, font or table.[566] The chancel becomes a stage, the robed choir is replaced with a trendy dressed band, the pulpit is now a Plexiglas lectern, screens project the pastor's head writ large, expensive stained glass gives way to equally expensive audio-visual equipment, and vested pastors now preside in their 'street clothes.' The pastor, no longer needing to battle the ancient symbols of the church, can become its defining symbol and an unfettered celebrity.

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[564] Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212-213.
[565] Ibid., 22. Interestingly enough, the church as "theatre in the round," meant not only the pastor's authority increased, but so too did the congregation's. As the pastor and congregation's authority grew, God's waned.
[566] Ibid., 215-218.

Of course, the overwhelming majority of pastors approach nothing of actual celebrity status. However, the metaphor continues to shape and define much of what it means to be a successful minister in twenty-first century America. *Pastor as celebrity*, free from understandings of ministry as *office* and *profession*, is a distortion of *calling*. If the metaphor of therapist directs the pastor's eyes and ears away from a sovereign God onto a sovereign self, then the pastor as celebrity directs eyes and ears away from a crucified Savior onto a heroic self that cannot be sustained.

The professionalization of the priesthood resulted in two leading metaphors. The first, *pastor as therapist*, has already been introduced. The second is *pastor as CEO*.[567] This is arguably the most dominant and pervasive contemporary metaphor for ministry. The metaphor of CEO can be traced to Niebuhr's previously mentioned "pastoral director." Of course, it goes more deeply than that to a twentieth century American culture that increasingly esteemed organizations that delivered a product, created wealth or value, offered a return on investment, and could do all this efficiently. In short, the spirit of capitalism was exerting its influence on the American parish. Needless to say the church appeared ever more anachronistic and irrelevant. It proved unwieldy, unmanageable, awkward, under resourced, and even messy. Niebuhr convincingly argued, along with many others, that changing times required a change in pastoral identity. And in large part, denominations and pastors heeded his advice.

On May 7, 1945 the Allied forces accepted the formal surrender of Nazi Germany. For Americans, it meant the return of thousands of young soldiers, men eager to start or finish degrees, begin careers, get married, own a home, and start families. This resulted in one of America's greatest population explosions, the postwar baby-boom generation. For the American church, this translated into a meteoric rise in membership. During the late 1940's church

[567] Joseph C Hough, Jr., and John B Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 16.

membership eclipsed fifty percent of the U.S. population. By the middle of the 1950's this number would rise to well over sixty percent. The swell in population and the subsequent housing shortage created a new phenomenon: suburbia. The postwar generation flocked back to church. As the population grew, as it migrated out of city centers, and as parents sought religious education for their children, the church answered as best it knew how. To keep up with demand, American denominations entered one of the most ambitious building campaigns in history. From 1945-1955 denominations spent three billion dollars on construction. The investment proved worthwhile. By the end of the 1950's tithing to churches reached two and a half billion dollars annually.[568]

This extraordinary growth left seminaries, judicatories, and pastors scrambling to understand how best to meet the demands and needs of a postwar American church. Seemingly overnight pastors were required to negotiate real-estate contracts, construct buildings, manage multi-person staffs, oversee growing budgets, birth charitable organizations, mobilize large numbers of volunteers, supervise religious education, and offer innovative programming. Gradually denominations abandoned city neighborhoods with sidewalks and porches in exchange for suburban neighborhoods with attached garages and air-conditioning. Quickly fading were the days of parish-based neighborhood churches. Instead, suburban Americans were becoming religious consumers, or "church shoppers," mirroring every other aspect of their lives. The world had tilted from Keynesian economics to Milton Friedman's free market, and the church was swept along.[569] For pastors, this exerted a new level of complexity to an already demanding profession. They now operated in a competitive religious marketplace, or so they were led to believe. Pastors grappled for ways of understanding their calling in this new "growth industry." They found help in the likes of IBM, GE, and General Motors. The pastoral entrepreneur was born. Some pastors thrived, others muddled through, and still others were frustrated

[568] Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and the Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p.27.
[569] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

and confused. In 1961 Joseph Sittler writes, "These [pastors] are deeply disturbed because they have a sense of vocational guilt….This sense of guilt has an observable content. A minister has been ordained to an Office; he too often ends up running an office. He was solemnly ordained to the ministry in Christ's church. Most of the men I know really want to be what they intended and prepared for. Instead they have ended up in a kind of dizzy occupational oscillation."[570] It was this change from "assuming" an office to "running" an office that dramatically altered pastoral identity, privileging "doing" over "being."

The postwar membership boom was short lived. By the mid-1960's decline was easily evident in the Protestant mainline and it eventually reached mainstream evangelicalism as well.[571] Even though the American public began to abandon church, pastors refused to abandon the metaphor of CEO. In many cases, instead of renouncing *pastor as CEO* it was wed to *pastor as celebrity*, proving a potent factor in birthing the modern American mega-church—Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel (1965), Bill Hybels' Willow Creek Community Church (1975), Rick Warren's Saddleback Church (1979), and more recently Craig Groeschel's 46,000 member LifeChurch.TV (1996). These pastors manage sprawling national, even international congregations, replicating their "brand" in various complex and sophisticated ways. In fact, the vast majority of Americans are within an easy drive of one or more of these pastors' affiliated or satellite campuses. The metaphor of CEO has taken pastors well beyond the well-trod path of congregational leadership and the four walls of a sanctuary. For example, Oral Roberts (1918-2009) pioneered TV evangelism and founded Oral Robert's University in 1963. Jerry Falwell (1933-2007), pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, was cofounder of the once powerful political action group Moral Majority (1979), and founder and president of Liberty University (1971), now the largest institution of higher learning in American. One last example is Pat Robertson (1930-), media-mogul, university chancellor, and once hopeful for the U.S.

[570] Joseph Sittler, *The Ecology of Faith* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 78.
[571] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Church of American 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 247.

presidency. These are just a few examples this modern metaphor has in stretching pastoral imagination and identity in new, often redemptive, yet occasionally unfaithful ways.

Every American pastor, for better or worse, contends with the metaphor of CEO. One popular book on church stewardship reads, "Pastors are the CEO's of their congregations. No single person is more responsible for what goes on in his or her church than the lead pastor…very few of our pastors accept the responsibility to raise funds for the organization they lead."[572] This quote is from a chapter entitled "The Pastor *Must* Be a Fund-Raiser." The metaphor has saturated pastoral imagination in the most routine ways. Today's pastors are likely equipped with the latest technology, refer to the church secretary as an "executive assistant," and work out of their "office" and not a "study." Pastors are now expected to engage church leadership in "strategic planning," spend far more hours in business meetings than behind the font, table or pulpit, and rush to employ a "communication director" to attractively "brand" their church to the community. Pastors are often referred to as "head of staff," "lead pastor," or "executive pastor." The Alban Institute, Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit, *Faith & Leadership* online magazine, and Christianity Today International's *Leadership Journal* are just a few of the cross-denominational organizations that equip pastors to better fulfill their leadership, executive and managerial potential. Due to a changing vocabulary, even within many seminaries, countless pastors would find the Harvard Business Review and Warren Buffet's biography easier and more helpful reads than Augustine's *De Trinitate* or Calvin's *Institutes*. Every American pastor contends with this powerful identity forming metaphor. Undeniably, it has shaped and empowered the pastoral imagination to work in ways that have been enormously life affirming and kingdom building. However, when the CEO metaphor is left unchallenged and unchecked it risks taking

[572] J. Cliff Christopher, *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 44. The reason the pastor "must" be a fund-raiser, according to the author's first chapter, "Survival of the Fittest," is that "each year finds the number of nonprofits in America growing by anywhere from 5 to 7 percent…as more and more organizations vie for fewer and fewer dollars, someone has to lose" (2).

pastoral ministry captive. The pastor becomes no longer rooted in and defined by who she is before and in relationship to God, community and creation but rather by what she has done on behalf of and for God, community and creation, crushing pastors under a potentially virulent and toxic form of Pelagianism.

The Limits of Metaphor

Even the best and most profound metaphors have their limits. As already implied, discourse without practice will not lead to faithful formation of pastoral identity. But even more specifically to metaphors, there is, to use a phrase of Dulles, no "master image." Each metaphor can only carry so much freight. They open up fields of vision only to shutter others. Lakoff and Johnson write, "The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept, a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor."[573] One problem for pastors is an inability or unwillingness to recognize the role and influence that metaphor exerts in shaping their pastoral imagination. The second danger is an overreliance on a particular metaphor or model of ministry, consciously or subconsciously. Taken together—one, disregard for metaphor despite its influence, and two, an overreliance on one dominant image—metaphor ceases to be metaphor; rather, it becomes an absolute and total expression of what was once deemed a reality that transcended space, time, or any singular definition. The result is an image that defines rather that reveals in part a much larger whole. This reductionism limits the possibility of the metaphor's object to be any more than the metaphor itself, or to be what it *actually* is. When an object—such as pastoral identity—is captive to a single metaphor, then it is dramatically restricted, causing confusion, because the lone metaphor cannot entirely account for all the nuances of that which it is attempting to refer to. This is the confusion that so many pastors express and experience. Their identity is dominated by one focal image, an

[573] Johnson and Lakoff, *Metaphors*, 10.

image unable to attend to the rich complexities of an ancient vocation. An image, when applied to the exclusions of others, ceases to be metaphor altogether.

Scripture uses metaphor as a constellation of images. Paul Minear has identified ninety-six biblical images or analogies describing the church. He writes, "In every generation the use and re-use of the Biblical images has been one path by which the church has tried to learn what the church is, so that it could become what it is not."[574] From understanding the nature of the church to nature of atonement, Scripture utilizes a multiplicity of metaphors and images. Jesus himself, communicating the nature of his incarnation, employs a whole series of familiar metaphors: "I am the *bread* of life" (Jn 6:35), "I am the *light* of the world" (8:12), "I am the *gate*" (10:9), "I am the good *shepherd*" (10:11), "I am the *resurrection* and the *life*" (11:25-26), "I am the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*" (14:6), and "I am the *vine*" (15:5). Like a great symphony, all of these metaphors serve to disclose various aspects of Jesus' person and work, harmonizing and revealing, at least in part, a transcendent reality otherwise inaccessible to the unaided human mind.

The early church Fathers understood the importance of metaphor, but they clearly, possibly more importantly, understood its limits as well. Take for instance the classic metaphor of "shepherd." As already shared, John Chrysostom used this image extensively when discussing pastoral identity. However, he was also keenly aware of its limits. Chrysostom writes, "You cannot treat men with the same authority with which a shepherd treats a sheep…It is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion. We neither have authority granted us by law to restrain sinners, nor, if it were, should we know how to use it, since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice."[575] It is clear that Chrysostom exhibits a level of sophistication and caution than many serving in and thinking about the church

[574] Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 25.
[575] Quoted from Purves, *Pastoral Theology*, 44.

today do not. Take as an example the metaphor for ministry popularized by Henry Nouwen, the "wounded healer." What Nouwen meant versus what the metaphor has come to mean in forming a great number of pastors for ministry are two different things. Greg Jones writes:

> "Unfortunately, *wounded healer* has too often been disconnected from the pattern of Christ's dying and rising. And that has allowed people to center themselves in their own wounds—and return regularly to lick them. The notion of a wounded healer has too often degenerated into a pop-psychology definition of woundedness as a crucial criterion for ordained ministry. As a result, we have allowed and even encouraged needy people who don't know "who they are" to become entrusted with leadership of congregations."[576]

This is just one example of how metaphors, when left unchecked by a diversity of images, cannot only dominate pastoral identity but distort it as well. When a singular metaphor is dominant it becomes, according to McFague, a model.[577] Models are helpful because, like metaphors, they give us a way of thinking and talking about things previously beyond our grasp. However, models, according to McFague can be risky as well:

> "Models are necessary, then, for they give us something to think about when we do not know what to think, a way of talking when we do not know how to talk. But they are also dangerous, for they exclude other ways of thinking and talking, and in so doing they can easily become literalized, that is, identified as *the* one and only way of understanding a subject. This danger is more prevalent with models than with metaphors because models have a wider range and are more permanent; they tend to object to competition in ways that metaphors do not."[578]

This is precisely what has happened to modern metaphors for ministry. As models, these metaphors have become "literalized." And as models, they do not easily tolerate "competition." The result is that classics metaphors for ministry have found it difficult to maintain even a fractional hold of the pastoral imagination. The losses of these metaphors have meant a loss, among other things, of the pastor's affection for beauty.

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[576] Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*, 91.
[577] McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 23
[578] Ibid., 24.

Unfortunately, pastors all too often assume modern metaphors as wishful expressions of *who* they want to be and *how* they want to be viewed by the broader culture. Scorned, mocked, caricatured, overlooked and forgotten by their cultured despisers, twentieth and twenty-first century pastors have leapt at the chance for new-found legitimacy in a world rapidly and eagerly marginalizing institutional and dogmatic religion. Consequently, pastors miss the deep joy and grand adventure of inhabiting an ancient calling shaped by a lived Scripture and Tradition contextually incarnated. And instead, pastors tragically rehearse Israel's idolatrous building of the golden calf.

If the *pastor as therapist* is concerned about the sovereign individual, if the *pastor as celebrity* is concerned about the heroic pastor, and if the *pastor as CEO* is concerned about the almighty institution, then what metaphor for ministry might return the pastor's gaze to behold the beauty of the Triune God and his creation? In other words, how do pastors cultivate an identity possessed with the imagination to see and hear, as Gerald Manley Hopkins wrote, a "world charged with the grandeur of God?" Sallie McFague writes with regard to the imagination, "Truth lies in the imagination. This may be only half a truth, but it is the half we most often forget."[579] If image precedes and takes priority over reality, then metaphor begins to convert the imagination of pastors to behold God's beauty, to receive ministry as gift, to experience deep joy, and to exist "for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

[579] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 29.

V. The Pastor as Poet

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Horatio has barged in on a conversation between Hamlet and his dead father's ghost. The ghost is urging Hamlet to take revenge against his murderer, who happens to be the deceased king's own brother, now King Claudius. The plot further thickens—Claudius is presently married to the deceased king's wife, Hamlet's mother. Horatio is a student at the University of Wittenberg. Being the well-reasoned archetypal Protestant humanist, he is having difficulty believing his eyes. Hamlet addresses Horatio's disbelief:

> **Hamlet**: Swear by my sword never to speak of this that you have heard.
> **Ghost**: Swear by his sword.
> **Hamlet**: Well said, old mole, canst work I' th' earth so fast? A worthy pioneer! Once more remove, good friends.
> **Horatio**: O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
> **Hamlet**: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.[580]

The modern Protestant pastor is more often like Horatio than Hamlet. He or she is unable to welcome that which is, in Hamlet's words, "wondrous strange."[581] The pastor, grounded in a story of an uncreated Triune God who created ex-nihilo, ought to know more than most that what is strange, mysterious, and even invisible is often more *real* than what is visible. Eugene Peterson, early on in parish ministry, attempts to find common ground between his suburban church plant and his friend's inner city Colonial parish. It was in reading together Charles Williams' *The Descent of the Dove* that Peterson had the following epiphany:

> But if we could learn to submit our imaginations to Williams and his evocation of the Holy Spirit in all the details of our two-thousand-year history, we might be able to see what was *really* going on and enter into it, praying *Veni Creator Spiritus*, "come Creator Spirit." That was the only thing, aside from our friendship, that we had in common as pastors, but it was the biggest thing. The biggest thing in this case was invisible. It always is."[582]

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[580] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 5, 159-167.
[581] It is not out of the ordinary for pastoral ministry to be understood as a 'wondrous calling,' as evidenced in the title of a recent book by two pastors, Lillian Daniel and Martin Copenhaver, *This Odd and Wondrous Calling: The Public and Private Lives of Two Ministers (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).
[582] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 144.

To say that the most important things are invisible is not a way of denigrating the visible. For the Christian, the visible owes its existence to the expressed and overflowing love and life of the Trinity. And the fullness of God is made visible in the Incarnation (John 1:14). The Incarnation is paradoxically mysterious *and* commonplace. It is in the Incarnation that the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the ongoing visible presence of Christ in and for the life of the world. In this sense, the Church exists to see and be seen—to behold and reveal the glory of the Father through Son. At the heart of this paradox is the sacramental nature of the Church's ministry.

As argued throughout, the modern pastor's predicament is one of failing vision. The pastor has lost the ability to see. To be clear, and at the risk of sounding elementary, I am not suggesting that pastors' eyes are failing to process and analyze wavelengths of light. I am speaking of a failure of vision in a metaphorical sense. This is what Paul calls the "eyes of your heart," which is a gift from God, "the Father of glory" (Ephesians 1:17-18). This kind of seeing enables the believer to catch a glimpse of the "hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe…" (Eph. 1:18-19). This way of seeing does not exclude a physiological sense of seeing, but it is not limited by it either.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Letter to Seminarians*, writes, "Where people no longer perceive God, life grows empty."[583] The modern pastor is unable to see rightly. She or he is unable to behold the beauty of God, which establishes ministry as a generous gift that elicits joy. This failure of vision is a result of assuming modern metaphors for ministry, at the exclusion of others, both biblical and extra-biblical, which ground pastoral identity back in grace. One broad aim of this project is to demonstrate the need for a wide-ranging reengagement with the classic biblical

[583] Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Seminarians*, from the Vatican, 18 October 2010, the Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20101018_seminaristi.html.

and extra-biblical metaphors for ministry. As stated several times, a faithful pastoral identity is best rooted in a constellation of metaphors.[584] It is in the context of reengaging the classic metaphors for ministry generally that this project has been more specifically concerned with the pastor's loss of vision—the ability to behold the beauty of God.

The question this final chapter asks is whether there is available to us a fitting metaphor which is able to help restore the pastor's ability to behold the beauty of God. I would like to suggest the metaphor of poet. Of course, this in many ways is not a new metaphor; this is partly due to the fact that lots of pastors have been poets as well. Nevertheless, I believe it is a metaphor, for reasons that will follow, that can begin to aid the pastor in apprehending God's beauty. Denis Johnson, the recently deceased American writer and poet, was well-know for *Jesus' Son* (1992), *Fiskadoro* (1985), and won a National Book Award for *Tree of Smoke* (2007). In response to a question about how he understands himself as a poet and writer he quoted Joseph Conrad, "My tasks which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*. That—and no more, and it is everything."[585] Conrad's full text adds, "If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand; and, perhaps, also a glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask."[586] This is quite and affirmation of the aesthetic pull and push of the poet. Somehow, this has an uncanny resonance with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets. There is a sense in which we do not feel, we do not hear, and we ultimately do not see as we should. We no longer, or maybe never have, longed for or desired a "glimpse of the truth for which [we] have forgotten to ask for."

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[584] As Sallie McFague explains, "Many metaphors and models are necessary…a piling of images is essential." Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 20.
[585] Michiko Kakutani, "Denis Johnson's Poetic Visions of a Fallen World," *New York Times*, May 27, 2017, A1.
[586] This quote can be found in the preface to the American edition of Joseph Conrad's "The Nigger of the Narcissus" which was first published in 1897. Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (New York: Doubleday, 1914), 14.

A poet is someone, like Hamlet, who gives the wondrous strange welcome. A poet is someone who is able to see the world a bit more closely or clearly. It is someone who can see beyond our world's obsession with the objective, factual, and empirical. The poet is a person with a well-disciplined imagination, keenly aware that much truth hides behind humanity's limited capacity for knowing. The poet is an epistemological optimist but for very different reasons than the modern rational person. Where the modern person has traditionally been over-dependent upon rationality, the poet allows reason to seek, guide, and serve, rather than hold captive, the body's senses. The poet does not merely assemble a world but receives it and makes it known. In this sense the poet's task, as C. S. Lewis writes, is incarnational:

> "It seems to me appropriate, almost inevitable, that when that great Imagination which in the beginning, for Its own delight and for the delight of men and angels and (in their proper mode) of beasts, had invented and formed the whole world of Nature, submitted to express Itself in human speech, that speech should sometimes be poetry. For poetry too is a little incarnation, giving body to what had been before invisible and inaudible."[587]

Therefore the poet's posture towards knowledge and truth is one of humility and awe, opening up possibilities to see the world in ways beyond the literal. The poet approaches the world not as something to be dissected and classified, but as something to marvel at and enjoy—something to behold.

Reasons for a New Metaphor

Before we look at the metaphor of poet, let me first make a few observations regarding the longstanding precedent of introducing new metaphors for ministry.[588] To propose a new metaphor, even an extra-biblical metaphor such as 'poet,' is not in itself a novel idea. Even within the New Testament the models

[587] C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), chapter 1, paragraph 8, page 5. See also Wayne Martindale and Jerry Root, eds., *The Quotable Lewis* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1990), 1187.

[588] Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books, 2002, eds. ?), 152. The introduction of metaphors could be caused by any number of variables: address new challenges, emphasize certain theological distinctive, or respond to contextual needs.

and metaphors for ministry shift.[589] As Dulles writes, "A historical study of the development of Christian ministry would probably show that the Church in every age has adjusted its structures and offices so as to operate more effectively in the social environment in which it finds itself."[590] The challenge is not so much the introduction of new metaphors for ministry; rather, the challenge is the introduction of "fitting" metaphors for ministry. Dulles makes this point at the beginning of his short book *The Priestly Office*:

> "It is not uncommon today to speak of a crisis of priesthood in Western Europe and North America…The causes are doubtless complex, and I do not intend to analyze them in this volume. I believe, however, that one contributing cause has been the uncertainty about the role and identity of the priest arising from the introduction of new theological paradigms."[591]

Of course Dulles speaks specifically of Roman Catholic priests, but his point is equally valid for North American Protestant clergy as well. Moreover, what Dulles means by 'new theological paradigms' is in itself complex. However, part of his meaning, especially in light of his work in *Models of the Church*, has to do with the important role present or emerging images, models, or metaphors play in shaping ecclesiology. Here Dulles offers a helpful word of caution: pastors should not assume metaphors indiscriminately. The Church should always be asking what new metaphors aim to achieve—revolution, power, respectability, relevance, etc.

Metaphor has been employed by the Church because, as Susan Brooks Thistlewhaite writes:

> "Metaphor is thought in action. Metaphor reveals the deepest experiences of human beings and impels them to act in new ways. Metaphor has frequently been employed by Christians in the history of the church both to describe their communal experience and to motivate themselves to repentance and change."[592]

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[589] As Dulles explains, the New Testament has an absence of precision when it comes to a single focal image related to leadership within the early Church. The images shift depending on whether you are in the Pauline letters, the Book of Acts, or the Pastoral Epistles. Ibid., 153.
[590] Ibid., 153.
[591] Avery Cardinal Dulles, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 1.
[592] Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Metaphors for the Contemporary Church* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983), 18.

For the Church, metaphor is both descriptive and prescriptive. Metaphor explains and guides, reveals and creates, and convicts and transforms. The question is not whether pastors will and should assume new metaphors for ministry. As Dulles recognizes, new metaphors/paradigms are always, welcome or not, exerting some pressure on the formation of pastoral identity. The question is how will the pastor welcome metaphors that strengthen this 'wondrous calling' while building a resistance to metaphors that do not.

Donald Messer offers three broad guidelines for helping us understand the reason for introducing new metaphors for ministry:

1. First, images can inflame the imagination and provide us identities beyond simply filling offices or fulfilling role expectations.

2. A second reason for encouraging the search for contemporary images is the hope of recovering a sense of urgency.

3. Third, the search for contemporary images of Christian ministry may also enable us to find a sense of direction or organizing motif for our communities of faith in the world.[593]

First, new metaphors "inflame the imagination." As Messer explains, "Beyond the functional roles of preaching, administrating, leading worship, and such, ministers are called to symbolize the holy amid the profane, to represent a vision larger than parochial self-interest, and to stand at the helm of leadership while reaching out to heal the wounds of the broken."[594] New metaphors help us to see and then tell it, as Emily Dickinson once wrote, "slant."[595]

Second, new metaphors, as Messer explains, help the pastor recover a "sense of urgency." Lakoff and Johnson speak of the link between metaphor and cultural coherence. They argue that the most pressing, urgent, and fundamental "values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most

[593] Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*, 25-28.
[594] Ibid., 26.
[595] "Tell all truth, but tell it slant," writes Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1960) 506.

fundamental concepts in the culture."[596] Reading the dominant and present metaphors of any culture or subculture reveals much about the timely and vital characteristic of the age. Metaphors are a sort of commentary on what is and what needs to be. Metaphors that gain purchase in the imagination are those that are supremely timely. They are by nature urgent. They address life as it happens.

Third, contemporary metaphors help Christian ministry find a "sense of direction." Metaphors have the power to establish ministry priorities: Are we to entertain? Are we to counsel? Are we to advocate? It is striking that the doctrine of the church can remain quite constant across space and time while the lived out expression of those doctrines can widely vary. Messer explains, "The issue facing our churches is not that we lack a consensus on major ideas or theology; we suffer not so much from confusion, but from infidelity to that which we as Christians affirm."[597] Messer seems to be pointing, knowingly or not, towards metaphor's ability to shape desire. In a sense, metaphor helps us to see that the pursuit of truth is not enough, and may not even be the central task of ministry.[598] Here the Psalmist points the way, "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4, NRSV).

The Pastor as Poet

The introduction of new metaphors requires or forces some sort of reassessment and reflection regarding the state of pastoral ministry. At its best, an introduction or re-introduction of metaphor is clarifying. And for many pastors this process of discovery is revealed in the crucible of ministry.

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[596] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 22.
[597] Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*, 28.
[598] This leads right back to Balthasar's point that attention to Truth and Goodness are inadequate in and of themselves. See Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 19.

Eugene Peterson, an occasional poet, began pastoral ministry in the early 1960's.[599] The pastoral counseling movement was at this point several decades old. Early on in ministry, Peterson was invited to a weekly meeting of clergy convened by psychiatrists from John Hopkins Medical Center. These clergy were to become "a first line of response to the burgeoning mental-health needs" of this rapidly suburbanizing Harford County Maryland.[600] For over two years Peterson wrestled with the clash of metaphors in shaping his identity. Was he a pastor or a counselor? Was he both? How did these metaphors balance or differ? Peterson contrasts the two metaphors—pastor and counselor—by reflecting on his relationship to his congregation on Sundays (the day of worship) versus Tuesdays (the day of his group sessions with fellow-clergy and psychiatrists). On Sunday, writes Peterson:

> I was in the process of coming to terms with my congregation, just as they were: their less-than-developed emotional life, their lack of intellectual curiosity, their complacent acceptance of a world of consumption and diversion, their seemingly peripheral interest in God. I wasn't giving up on them…And I was finding areas of common ground that made us fellow pilgrims, comrades in arms in recognizing unexpected shards of beauty in worship and scripture and one another."[601]

Peterson then contrasts Sunday with Tuesday:

> "In our Tuesday seminars I was given a vocabulary and imagination to understand the people in my congregation as problems. This was refreshing. Here was a way of giving clarity to this haphazard gathering of people with various, mostly undefined, aspirations to get in on something more than they were experiencing, something that had to do, maybe, with a vaguely imagined God. Defined as problems, my congregation gave me an agenda that I could do something about…On Tuesdays I was being given an entirely different way to define my congregation—as problems."[602]

On Sundays Peterson was recognizing "shards of beauty" and on Tuesdays he was recognizing "problems." Oddly enough, and for differing reasons, Peterson gained satisfaction out of both. But as he eventually realized, both—pastor and counselor—did not coexist with much ease. As Peterson admits, "The Tuesday-

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[599] By his own admission Peterson would say his poetry is an extension of his pastoral ministry, something to be shared with close friends and family. He has recently published a collection of poems. See Eugene Peterson, *Holy Luck* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2013).
[600] Peterson, *The Pastor*, 131.
[601] Ibid., 135.
[602] Ibid., 135-136.

Sunday comparison brought clarity to exactly what was unique in my workplace: my congregation."[603] He goes on to explain:

> I had assumed that Tuesdays were a way to be of help to the community. And they were. The unintended consequence was that they helped me understand the vocational priority for me, a pastor, of Sunday—the uniqueness of congregation…But it was on Tuesdays that I realized in myself a latent messianic complex, which, given free reign, would have obscured the very nature of congregation by redefining it as a gathering of men and women whom I was in charge of helping with their problems. As it turned out, the Tuesday meetings developed muscle and sinew that clarified and strengthened the 'hints and guesses' that had for twenty-five years been forming in bits and pieces the vocation of pastor that had so recently—it had been a long pregnancy!—come into renewed focus."[604]

In light of Messer's three-fold rationale for introducing new metaphors, Peterson's story illustrates the power of metaphor to inflame the imagination, recover a sense of urgency, and clarify a sense of direction. For Peterson there was an openness to honestly wrestle with a model of ministry (pastoral counselor) that was, with all good intentions, seeking to shape his pastoral identity for the better. As already stated, Peterson was and is an occasional poet. However, what matters most is not that Peterson is both a pastor and a poet. What matters is the metaphoric relationship between pastor and poet. Craig Barnes explains:

> "I believe that all who are called by the Holy Spirit to serve the church as pastors have this poetic vision…This does not mean that the pastor should end a meeting of the board of trustees by whipping out a few lyrical lines that try to make eternal sense of the budget. Nor does it mean that the pastor torments the congregation with sermons that rhyme. It certainly doesn't mean that pastoral ministry is best understood as a subset of that larger discipline of the humanities called poetry. My interest in the term *poet* is analogical."[605]

Our concern is not so much that the pastor is a poet as much as seeing the pastor as poet. Reflecting back on the period of self discovery, Peterson personally identifies the analogical importance of pastor as poet, "By the time I embraced my vocational identity as a pastor I had realized that pastors and poets have a lot in common: we use words with reverence, get immersed in everyday

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[603] Ibid., 140.
[604] Ibid., 140-141.
[605] M. Craig Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 18.

particulars, are wary of abstractions, spy out the glories of the commonplace, warn of illusions, attend to the subtle interconnections between rhythm and meaning and spirit."[606] The natural link between pastor and poet should come as no surprise. After all, the biblical prophets and psalmists were all poets, if not formally identified as such. They saw and expressed a reality that was often hidden. Doing theology was an encounter with God, oftentimes a terrifying encounter. The prophets as poets were citizens of another kingdom. They were able to see, where others could or would not, a cosmic drama unfold before their eyes.

Marilynne Robinson, in reflecting on the way in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote as a pastor/theologian, comments, "Great theology is always a kind of giant and intricate poetry, like epic or saga…Theology is also close to the spoken voice. It evokes sermon, sacrament, and liturgy, and, of course, Scripture itself, with all its echoes of song and legend and prayer."[607] Robinson sees in Bonhoeffer a pastor with a deeply formed poetic imagination, able to set the present, even the present evils, in a grander narrative. Bonheoffer's "language," writes Robinson, "functions not as ornament but as ontology. For him, it makes the most essential account that can be made of Being itself."[608] This, it seems to me, is the pastor's task: to give an account of the beauty of Being.

Now let us complete, or qualify, our metaphor. Let us talk about the pastor as *minor* poet.[609] Craig Barnes, drawing on T.S. Eliot, makes the distinction between major and minor poets, "Eliot has claimed that every culture needs minor as well as major poets. The major poets, who are few and far between, provide enduring expressions of the deep truth of life. Minor poets have the more modest goal of inculcating that truth to particular people in particular

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[606] Eugene Peterson, *Holy Luck*, xiv.
[607] Marilynne Robinson, *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (New York: Picador, 2005), 117.
[608] Ibid., 118.
[609] This idea of pastor as *minor* poet comes from Craig Barnes aforementioned book, *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtext in the Ministerial Life*. Barnes' concern is recovering the pastor's ability to see generally. I am arguing that the 'seeing' that needs to take place is the beholding of Beauty.

places."[610] Major poets are those whose work demands attention in its entirety.[611] These works transcend a particular context. Minor poets, on the other hand, are exegetes of these major poets and their works. This means, among other things, that minor poets have to be attentive both to the works of the major poets and their own present context—their congregation. Drawing pastors in to the metaphor, Barnes writes:

> "Pastors consider the biblical authors to be their major poets…For insights we minor poets also look to the saints of our tradition, who emerge ever so rarely, not only to speak this biblical truth but also to embody it…The vast majority of pastors are not major but minor poets whose humble calling is to spend their lives making sense of the major lines of poetry they have inherited from the sacred tradition to a specific gathering of people called the local congregation."[612]

This paints a quite different vision of pastoral ministry than the most dominant contemporary metaphors for ministry. First, the metaphor 'pastor as minor poet' gives the minister an important sense or proper location within the larger Christian tradition. This is not a way of saying that the pastor as minor poet is somehow less important than the major poets. What it does say is that this metaphor can serve as an antidote to the North American heroic individualism that has so completely infected much of American Protestantism. Second, the pastor as minor poet prioritizes the pastor's calling. The pastor as minor poet's humble calling is to make sense of and pay attention to the "major lines of poetry" that have been received from tradition and for a particular outpost of God's kingdom. Third, these "major lines of poetry" spell out not some abstract truths that we ought to assent to; rather, these lines of poetry bear witness to the meta-narrative of creation generated by the life of the Triune God. In other words, the pastor as minor poet is one who is supremely attentive to a story of a certain kind—one that begins in a garden and ends in a city.

The pastor as minor poet's imagination is guided by story, both the stories of his or her congregation and the epic stories of the major poets. Whereas major

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[610] Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet*, 24.
[611] T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1957), 44.
[612] Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet*, 24-25.

poets write the story, or at least significant aspects of the story, minor poets keep the story alive. However, the pastor as minor poet is doing more than rehearsing the mighty acts of God. The pastor as minor poet is able to see the particularities of the Gospel narrative come to life in space and time, in and through the Church.[613] They see, to use a phrase of Gerald Manley Hopkins, that "Christ plays in ten thousand places."[614]

The pastor as minor poet's search for truth is a quest that begins and is sustained with a vision of beauty that must sift through an ancient, sacred, and living drama. Stanley Hauerwas, using his typical biting wit, sheds some light on the pastor's relationship with story and truth by recounting one aspect of his friendship with Bishop Will Willimon:

> "Will is far more Methodist than I am, which means that he would like for people to like him. He also has less philosophical ability than anyone I have ever met. I think that is one of the reasons he is such a good preacher—he never lets the truth get in the way of a good story."[615]

In a way, the pastor as minor poet refuses to let the truth get in the way of *the* good story—the Gospel. This is not to say that truth is unimportant, far from it. It is to say that truth is drastically impoverished where the pastor inadequately tells the beautiful story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.[616] As Walter Brueggemann suggests about Christianity in North America:

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[613] The gospel comes to life in the central act of the Lord's Supper. This means that the storytelling nature of the church is essentially aesthetic. James K. A. Smith explains, "While the postmodern church is a storied community centered on the narrative of Scripture, it is also a Eucharistic community that replays the narrative in deed. Further, the symbols and signs of the Lord's Supper embody the gospel for us. Because the postmodern church values narrative, it values story and as such values the aesthetic experience engendered by material signs and symbols…Just as God communicates to humanity through the incarnation of the Word as flesh—the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)—so God continues to speak to the church through the material symbols of bread and wine but also through images and dance." See James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 77.

[614] Gerald Manley Hopkins, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*.

[615] Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologians Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 193.

[616] Robert Louis Wilken makes the case that early Christianity was 'inescapably ritualistic,' 'uncompromisingly moral,' and 'unapologetically intellectual.' Even so, "the Christian gospel was not an idea but a certain kind of story, a narrative about a person and things that had actually happened in space and time." In the West, and for many complex reasons, Christianity lost the narrative or story-shaped nature of the gospel. And an acceleration of this decline is in part due to or coincides with the demise of

> "The gospel is a truth widely held, but a truth greatly reduced. Partly, the gospel is simply an old habit among us, neither valued nor questioned. But more than that, our technical way of thinking reduces mystery to problem, transforms assurance into certitude, revises quality into quantity, and so takes the categories of biblical faith and represents them in manageable shapes."[617]

We live in what Brueggemann calls a "prose-flattened world."[618] What we need in just such an age are "poets that speak against a prose world."[619] In a conversation that revolves around worship and liturgy, James K. A. Smith writes, "We were created for stories, not propositions; for drama, not bullet points. As someone has suggested, humanity cannot live on prose alone. The story of God-become-flesh is best rendered by the poetry…of affective worship rather than the narrowly cognitive didacticism of Power-Pointed 'messages'."[620] Pastors need to be poets come to speak a "subversive fiction."[621] This "poetic discourse" represents "the re-enchantment…of speech, where speech reflects the Christian imagination, recognizing the importance of symbols, images, 'myths,' and metaphors as well as sharing space and time with music and the visual arts."[622] The pastor as minor poet, in his or her speech, preaches not to clarify doctrinal standards, not to give moral instruction, not to advise, encourage, motivate, or cheer. Again, this is not to say ethics is unimportant to the poet. As Stanley Hauerwas writes, "Poetry and literature do not just bolster our moral intentions; they affect how we perceive the world and hence what the moral life is about. For poetry does not just describe the known; it reveals dimensions of the unknown that make the known seem unfamiliar."[623] The poet learns through metaphor and stories "to see the world in which we must act."[624]

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beauty. Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 15.

[617] Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 1-2.

[618] Ibid., 1.

[619] Ibid., 3.

[620] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*, 140.

[621] Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, 3.

[622] This is referenced by Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*, 140. See Jonny Baker and Doug Gay, *Alternative Worship: Resources from and for the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 63.

[623] Stanley Hauerwas, "Vision, Stories, and Character" (1973) in *The Hauerwas Reader*, eds. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 167.

[624] Ibid.

The pastor as minor poet preaches to share the gospel, which is the story of the God who brought Israel out of Egypt and raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the subversive fiction that is real, but beyond our realizing. This is a fiction that cherishes, not belittles truth and goodness. Divorced from the gospel story truth and goodness are easily reduced and disconnected from Being. The gospel becomes humanity's word about God rather than God's word about and to humanity.[625] It is through a particular drama that truth and goodness become convertible with Being. This is why Brueggemann says:

> "The entertainment of a 'fiction' drives us beyond known truth. From the great narratives of Israel to the prophetic poems to the testimony of early Christians, the singers and storytellers spoke dangerously about dangerous matters, about new possibilities. The settled, entrenched, and certain heard only fiction, but it was a 'fiction' more powerful than facts."[626]

The pastor as minor poet is a prophet who breaks certainties and discloses possibilities. Quoting Medicus, Balthasar explains, "God needs prophets in order to make himself known, and all prophets are necessarily artistic. What a prophet has to say can never be said in prose."[627]

Behold and See

Brueggemann's primary concern is the recovery of the preaching life. "I want," writes Brueggemann, "to consider preaching as a poetic construal of an alternative world…this speech, entrusted to and practiced by the church, is an act of relentless hope; an argument against the ideological closing of life we unwittingly embrace."[628] Living close to the Biblical text, the pastor as poet is able to speak of a world beyond settled notions. It seems though, that the recovery of speech is predicated on the recovery of the pastor's vision. Moreover, it is the recovery of a specific vision of God's glory that needs

[625] Barth articulates this in a Christmas (1954) sermon preached to inmates of the Basel prison: "You see, we cannot possibly hear this story and not look away from ourselves, from our own life with its cares and burdens. There he is, our great God and Saviour, and here we are, human beings, and now it is true that he is for me, is for us." Karl Barth, *Deliverance to the Captives* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1978).
[626] Ibid., 6.
[627] Balthasar, *GL*, 43.
[628] Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, 6-7.

restoration. This vision then enables the kind of speech Brueggemann wishes to draw out of the pastoral life. The pastor needs to cultivate, in order to restore the gifted-ness of ministry, the ability to behold the beauty of the Triune God. The pastor as poet, or more specifically as minor poet, enables prophetic preaching by restoring sight to the contemporary pastor's limited vision. Without the ability to behold the glory of the Lord, the preaching task becomes moral instruction. In this there is no joy for either the preacher or the listener. In a series of essays Jurgen Moltmann "reasserts the value of aesthetic joy against the absolute claims of ethics." In the English introduction to these essays, David E. Jenkins writes that Moltmann's essays are an "impressive struggle" arguing that philosophy and theology have been more concerned "with the sin of man than with the glory of God."[629]

In a moment, we will further explore the loss and recovery of vision for the parish parson. But first let us discuss this idea of 'beholding' that is so central to the Christian experience of faith. If frequency is any indication of importance, then 'behold' (Gk. particle *idou*) is one of those words at the top of the list. In the Septuagint (LXX), 'behold' occurs well over 1100 times.[630] Likewise, the New Testament frequently uses the particle *idou* (c. 200 times, including 80 times in Luke-Acts, 62 times in Matthew, 26 times in Revelation).[631]

Protestant pastoral education has long been biased towards the delivery and mastery of content. The pastoral task has then been shaped to relay this content to an uniformed or under-informed laity in order that they may be moved towards appropriate belief and action. It took Barbara Brown Taylor fifteen years of parish ministry before she realized how harmful this would become to her and the

[629] See Jurgen Moltman, *Theology and Joy* (London: SCM Press, 1973), vi., 2.
[630] In contrast to Jewish literature, the particle *idou* occurs with much less frequency in classical literature. Incidentally, it almost never occurs in classical prose. See Moises Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. III. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 526.
[631] Ibid., 526, 9. Interestingly enough, *idou* is common in the tragedies and comedies of classical literature but rare in classical prose.

parish.[632] Taylor was far from ineffective as a minister, quite the opposite.[633] "Grace-Calvary was in trouble," writes Taylor, "because the congregation was growing. I was in trouble because I was doing my job the only way I knew how."[634] By all accounts, Taylor's ministry was vibrant and flourishing. Swelling attendance required four Sunday morning services, the establishment of a church plant, and a protracted discussion on the need for facility upgrades. Still, it was not the heavy demands on her time, the emotional toll of bearing with the needs of her congregation, or the bureaucratic minutia of running a parish that finally left Taylor empty; rather, she no longer was a minor poet, able to behold the world awash in the God's glory. She knew the doctrine to teach but had lost the vision for why those beliefs mattered. Taylor writes, "My role and my soul were eating each other alive. I wanted out of the belief business and back into the beholding business."[635] Beliefs are important, acknowledges Taylor, but it is only a vision of glory that can make the heart sing, "While I understood both why and how the early church had decided to wrap those mysteries in protective layers of orthodox belief, the beliefs never seized my heart the way the mysteries did."[636] Taylor describes her epiphanic moment:

> "Once I had begun crying on a regular basis, I realized just how little interest I had in defending Christian beliefs. The parts of the Christian story that had drawn me into the Church were not the believing parts but the beholding parts.
>
> 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy…'
> 'Behold the Lamb of God…'
> 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock…'
>
> Whether the narratives starred hayseed shepherds confronted by hosts of glittering angels or desert pilgrims watching something like a dove descend upon a man in a river as a voice from heaven called him 'Beloved,' Christian faith seemed to depend on beholding things that were clearly beyond belief, including Jesus' own teaching that acts of mercy toward perfect strangers were acts of mercy toward him."[637]

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[632] I was introduced to Taylor's memoir through Craig Barnes' *The Pastor as Minor Poet.*
[633] For a brief biography see http://www.barbarabrowntaylor.com/bio.htm.
[634] Barbara Brown Taylor, Lea*ving Church: A Memoir of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 105.
[635] Ibid., 111.
[636] Ibid., 110.
[637] Ibid., 109.

Taylor's loss of the 'beholding parts' brought an end to the 'believing parts' of her pastoral ministry. Implied in Taylor's account then is a loss in the pastor's ability to engage in the mission of God. The loss of vision, in other words, meant a loss of interest, rationale, and desire in both articulating orthodoxy and enacting orthopraxis. The true and the good lost their value.[638] Being unable to behold the beauty of God is both a loss of truth and goodness, but ultimately it is the greater loss of Being, "And if this is how the transcendentals fare because one of them has been banished, what will happen with Being itself?"[639] At some point Balthasar's question haunts every pastor. You hear the anguish this question prompts as Taylor laments,

> "Above all, I saw that my desire to draw as near to God as I could had backfired on me somehow. Drawn to care for hurt things, I had ended up with compassion fatigue. Drawn to a life of servanthood, I had ended up a service provider. Drawn to marry the Divine Presence, I had ended up estranged. Like the bluebirds that sat on my windowsills at home, pecking at the reflections they saw in the glass, I could not reach the greenness for which my soul longed. For years I had believed that if I just kept at it, the glass would finally disappear. Now, for the first time, I wondered if I had devoted myself to an illusion."[640]

Taylor had lost the ability to behold the beauty of the Lord, and the result, as Balthasar predicted, is that she "can no longer pray and soon no longer will be able to love."[641] As Taylor further diagnosis and describes her spiritual sickness, it is like reading a page from Evagrius Ponticus on *acedia*.[642] Taylor speaks of losing the poet's ability to see—failing to see "God's glory all over the place, including the places where Christian doctrine said that it should not be."[643]

Seeing rightly, beholding glory, is itself a gift from God. The ability to apprehend the beauty of God is only possible if first, an otherwise unknowable God reveals God's self, and second, if God gives, by faith, the eyes to see. Rudolf Bultmann

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[638] Balthasar, *GL*, 19.
[639] Ibid.
[640] Taylor, *Leaving Church,* 102.
[641] Balthasar, *GL*, 18.
[642] In chapter 3 we addressed the ancient spiritual sickness of *acedia*—what Evagrius calls the "noonday demon"—that plagues the monk/priest who fails to behold the beauty of God. *Acedia* manifests itself in a hatred of place, work, self, and the lost desire for God. See Evagrius, *The Praktikos*, 18-19.
[643] Taylor, *Leaving Church*, 110.

argues that the verbs of seeing in the gospel of John take on special significance. First, these verbs are used for "the perception of earthly things and happenings accessible to all men" (John 1:38, 47; 9:8).[644] Second, they are used for the "perception of supernatural things and events accessible only to a limited number of men" (1:32, 33, 34; 20:12, 14).[645] Both of these ways of 'seeing' include the physical eye. However, for Bultmann there is also a third way of seeing. Here the verbs of seeing are "applied also to revelation, which is no mystical inner vision, still less a Platonic vision of the forms, but a spiritual act of seeing."[646] Seeing in this way, according to Bultmann, is "the sight of faith."[647] Through this seeing by faith Jesus is revealed as the Son and is the revealer of the Father. And what is revealed of the Son and Father is the divine glory (Gk. *doxa*). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth…No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (ESV, John 1:14, 18). By faith we see this glory, and by faith, according to Paul, this seeing saves and sanctifies, it transforms, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (ESV, 2 Corinthians 3:18). The pastor as minor poet recovers this kind of seeing—a way of seeing that makes it possible not only for the pastor to communicate the reality of God's new creation, but to be an actual sign of that new creation. In some sense, the pastor as poet is both archeologist and artifact of an 'open secret.'[648]

As we have been saying, pastors have lost the ability, in large measure, to behold the glory of the Lord. Josef Pieper argues this is part of a larger modern

[644] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1971), 69 n. 2.
[645] Ibid.
[646] Moises Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 532.
[647] Bultmann, *John*, 69 n. 4.
[648] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

phenomenon where, "Man's ability to see is in decline."[649] Pieper does not mean the actual physiological ability of seeing; rather, he is referring to a deeper kind of sight. We have lost, according to Pieper, the poet's ability to see "the spiritual capacity to perceive the visible reality as it truly is."[650] We have lost, as Bultmann indicates, the "sight of faith," the 'third way' of seeing espoused in the gospel of John.

The pastor's sight is in decline, according to Pieper, because "*there is too much to see!*"[651] This is what Pieper identifies as "visual noise."[652] This means, among other things, that the North American Protestant pastor is heavily and seductively distracted. To make matters worse, the reigning metaphors for ministry are often the main culprits in redirecting or misdirecting the pastor's gaze. To lose the ability to see the glory of the Lord does not merely weaken pastoral ministry, it incapacitates it, because, "the ultimate fulfillment, the absolute meaningful activity, the most perfect expression of being alive, the deepest satisfaction, must needs happen in an instance of beholding, namely in the contemplating awareness of the world's ultimate and intrinsic foundations."[653]

A loss of sight means the pastor lives in a disenchanted world—a world devoid of beauty, which as we have already said is a world devoid of Being and consequently the possibility of being fully human. At first, it might seem that this loss of sight is entirely negative. However, the loss of sight is only negative if this decline never gives way to recovery. In fact, the decline of the pastor's ability to see is crucial to the pastor's eventual ability to distinguish between what is beautiful and what is ugly. In emerging from darkness, the pastor's belief and

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[649] Josef Pieper, "Learning How to See Again," *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 31. First published in the catalog for an art exhibition by the *Werkschule Munster* (1952).
[650] Ibid.
[651] Ibid., 32.
[652] Ibid., 33.
[653] Josef Pieper, "Work, Spare Time, and Leisure," *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 22. This was the keynote at the opening of an art exhibition. First published in *Die Zeit* (1953).

behavior is transformed by the expansive vista of grace that emerges against the backdrop of what was, what is, and what is to come. To see the form of Christ—the deep love of the Father—poured out in sacrifice for the world's blindness to God's glory and the world's own sin is to open up unending possibilities of human witness and flourishing. The pastor emerging from blindness sees the glory of God is ever more radiant, bringing about the power to transform both thought and action—Truth and Goodness. This is why David Bentley Hart can assert:

> "Ethics is an aesthetics: an optics, that is, in an unequivocal sense, an order of seeing that obeys a story of being according to which the other is delineated with the radiant proportions of the other, who elicits the infinite regard of God and compels an infinite awe and even love from the one who looks on (an awe that is, necessarily, a recognition of the other's beauty as other)."[654]

It is beholding beauty against the backdrop of that which is ugly that gives rise to "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). To emerge from blindness, is to emerge from any number of stories into *the* story of God's grace born in the form of Christ and seen as all creation is "recapitulated in him."[655] The pastor as poet is not attempting to recover sight; rather, the pastor as poet is gaining new eyes of faith—a new way of seeing that intends "a new heaven and a new earth," recognizing that the first heaven and the first earth are passing away (Revelation 21:1).

In 1946 C. S. Lewis published an essay entitled "Talking about Bicycles" that discusses the disenchantment we all face.[656] Quoting at length, Lewis writes:

> "Talking about bicycles," said my friend, "I have been through the four ages. I can remember a time in early childhood when a bicycle meant nothing to me: it was just part of the huge, meaningless background of grown-up gadgets against which life went on. Then came a time when to have a bicycle, and to have learned to ride it, and to be at last spinning along on one's own, early in the morning, under trees, in and out of the shadows, was like entering Paradise. That apparently effortless and frictionless gliding – more like swimming than any other motion, but really most like the discovery of a fifth element – that seemed to have solved the secret of life. Now one would begin to be happy. But, of course, I soon was reaching the third period. Pedaling to and fro from school (it was one

[654] Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 343.
[655] Ibid., 342.
[656] Originally written in 1946, this essay was later collected in *Present Concerns*. See C. S. Lewis, *Present Concerns*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, 1986).

> of those journeys up-hill both ways) in all weathers, soon revealed the prose of cycling. The bicycle, itself, became to me what his oar is to a galley slave."
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> "But what was the fourth age?" I asked.
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> "I am in it now, or rather I am frequently in it. I have had to go back to cycling lately now that there's no car. And the jobs I use it for are often dull enough. But again and again the mere fact of riding brings back a delicious whiff of memory. I recover the feelings of the second age. What's more, I see how true they were – how philosophical, even. For it really is a remarkably pleasant motion. To be sure, it is not a recipe for happiness as I then thought. In that sense the second age was a mirage. But a mirage of something."[657]

Lewis offers this story about bicycles as illustrative of something more universal to the human experience in the modern age. Lewis suggests, by way of this illustration, "four ages" that explain nearly every human experience.[658] He labels these the "Unenchanted Age, the Enchanted Age, the Disenchanted Age, and the Re-enchanted Age."[659] One 'application' Lewis offers, as further explanation for the importance of these four ages, is 'war':

> "Most of our juniors were brought up Unenchanted about war. The Unenchanted man sees (quite correctly) the waste and cruelty and sees nothing else. The Enchanted man is…thinking of glory and battle-poetry and forlorn hopes and last stands and chivalry. Then comes the Disenchanted Age….But there is also a fourth stage, though very few people in modern England dare to talk about it. You know quite well what I mean. One is not in the least deceived: we remember the trenches too well. We know how much of the reality the romantic view left out. But we also know that heroism is a real thing, that all the plumes and flags and trumpets of the tradition were not there for nothing. They were an attempt to honour what is truly honourable: what was first perceived to be honourable precisely because everyone knew how horrible war is. And that's where this business of the Fourth Age is so important."[660]

Unenchantment and Disenchantment take a negative view of the world. Enchantment and Re-enchantment take a positive view of the world. Nevertheless, sharing a disposition towards the world does not make these couplings the same thing. Lewis argues that it is "immensely important" to distinguish Unenchantment from Disenchantment, and Enchantment from Re-

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[657] Ibid., 67.
[658] Ibid., 68.
[659] Ibid.
[660] Ibid., 69-70.

enchantment.[661] To explain the differences Lewis turns to the poet. Lewis maintains that the war poetry of Homer is Re-enchantment and not Enchantment. Why, because "you see in every line that the poet knows, quite as well as any modern, the horrible thing he is writing about. He celebrates the heroism but he has paid the proper price for doing so. He sees the horror yet sees also the glory."[662] In this sense, Lewis sees Homer as a Re-enchanted poet, as opposed to an Enchanted poet who "obviously [has] no idea what a battle is like."[663]

Lewis draws a similar distinction between the Unenchanted man and the Disenchanted man. The Unenchanted man is the poet "in whom love is treated as lust and all war as murder—and so forth."[664] The Disenchanted man, on the other hand, "may have something to say," because this "writer [has been] through the Enchantment and come out on to the bleak highlands."[665] Lewis reserves his greatest criticism for the Unenchanted man who is no longer a poet just simply a writer or author, "If Unenchanted, into the fire with his book. He is talking of what he doesn't understand. But the great danger we have to guard against in this age is the Unenchanted man, mistaking himself for, and mistaken by others for, the Disenchanted man."[666]

"Finally," writes Lewis, "the question on which all hangs is whether we can go on to Re-enchantment." The pastor, serving even the shortest of tenures, has likely moved through Unenchantment, Enchantment, and Disenchantment. The more difficult transition for the modern Protestant pastor has been to arrive at Re-enchantment. The Enchanted age does not usually endure for long. The illusions of the perfect parish quickly give way to the reality that the church is a hospital for sinners. The pastor's blindness becomes a blessing after finally

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[661] Ibid., 70.
[662] Ibid., 70.
[663] Ibid. 70. Lewis gives as an example of Re-enchanted poetry *The Battle of Maldon*, an English poem from the tenth century. His examples of Enchanted poetry are the *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) by Thomas Macaulay and *Lepanto* (1911) by G. K. Chesterton.
[664] Ibid., 70.
[665] Ibid., 70.
[666] Ibid., 70-71.

emerging back into the light. In other words, Disenchantment grounds the pastor back in grace so that he or she may go on to Reenchantment.

Prior to his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19a),[667] Saul, "still breathing threats and murder," is in the Enchanted age. He is the Enchanted poet, to use the language of C. S. Lewis, "in whom love is treated as lust and all war as murder—and so forth."[668] Saul, knocked to the ground, unable to see, once certain of himself and his place in God's economy, now returns Jesus' question with a question of his own, "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:4, NRSV). Saul has entered the age of Disenchantment. He has "come out on to the bleak highlands."[669] Ironically, it is in Saul's blindness that he catches a vision of his future life in Christ. The risen and ascended Jesus explains to Ananias that Saul "has seen a vision" of Ananias "come in an lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight" (Acts 9:12). Again, the irony is that Saul, in a significant way, has already recovered, or been introduced to, a way of seeing that was heretofore unavailable to him. He is a man who has had a vision of that which will constitute his very being.[670] It is clear that Saul's arrival into the age of Reenchantment is an act of sovereign grace. Luke makes a brief, and not incidental, mention of what Saul is doing while receiving his vision and prior to the physiological recovery of Saul's sight: "At this moment he is praying" (Acts 9:11b). Saul has fallen still and silent before the Lord. And as we learn from the Psalms, this is the posture of biblical prayer (Psalm 46:10). The Psalmist is both a poet and one who prays, and those two offices are not incidental to each other. Saul is living out the promise of God from the prophet Isaiah, "In returning and

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[667] Saul's conversion is not simply to establish him in right relationship with the Father through the Son, but he is also converted to a calling. The risen and ascended Christ says to Ananias, "For he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15, NRSV).

[668] C. S. Lewis, "Talking About Bicycles", 70.

[669] Ibid., 70.

[670] John Stott explains the nature of Saul's conversion to be no "subjective vision or dream; it was an objective appearance of the resurrected and now-glorified Jesus Christ. The light he saw was the glory of Christ, and the voice he heard was the voice of Christ." See Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 170.

rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15, NRSV).

Luke also mentions what Saul is *not* doing, "He neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:9). Luke Timothy Johnson writes regarding this seemingly inconsequential note, "…it shows that Paul is going through a holy period of transition, a stage of liminality, whose end is shown by his resuming the taking of food in 9:19."[671] Saul becomes a poet as he falls quiet and still before the Lord. In this way Saul begins to recover his sight well before his eyes begin process waves of light again. He is making the journey from Disenchantment to Reenchantment.

Falling still before the glory of the Lord and the beauty of God's creation is the psalmist's life, is the poet's life, is the life of prayer, and is the life of the pastor. This connection of prayer—falling still, and experiencing the liminality of a particular space and time—between poet and pastor is why Eugene Peterson can write, "I found that keeping company with poets, men and women who care about words and are honest with them, who respect and honor their sheer overwhelming power, kept me alert—biblically alert, Jesus alert. I left their company less careless…."[672]

Mixing Metaphors: Poets, Harpooners, and Spiders

Saul's vision of his transformation and calling came, as we have just outlined, when he was still. And this stillness was far from inactivity. He prayed. And he received a vision of the calling that would soon come to be placed upon his life. Returning to an earlier theme from this project, Saul was wounded (blinded) by the beauty of the exalted Jesus. This wounding became the headwaters of his transformation. This wounding became a kind of optical training. Able to see, Saul vigorously persecuted Christians, so much so that he ran out of people in Jerusalem and had to move on to Damascus. Unable to see, Saul began to see

[671] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 164.
[672] Peterson, *Holy Luck*, xvi.

the glory, forcefully at first, of the exalted Christ. The former state was marked by busyness, hurriedness, and a kind of desperation. The latter was marked by stillness, attentiveness, and a realization of the life-giving presence of God. It was from the state of stillness that Saul emerged ready to effectively exercise the ministry to which he was being called.

Peterson recounts early on in ministry being overwhelmed by the busyness of being a pastor. After a while, he began to question the appropriateness of his calendar crowded with engagements. It was during this season of uneasy busyness that Peterson was reading Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*.[673] One scene in particular became key to shaping Peterson's understanding of what it means to be a pastor:

> There is a turbulent scene in which a whaleboat scuds across a frothing ocean in pursuit of the great white whale, Moby Dick. The sailors are laboring fiercely, every muscle taut, all attention and energy concentrated on the task. The cosmic conflict between good and evil is joined; chaotic sea and demonic sea monster versus the morally outraged man, Captain Ahab. In the boat, however, there is one man who does nothing. He doesn't hold an oar; he doesn't perspire; he doesn't' shout. He is languid in the crash and the cursing. This man is the harpooner, quiet and poised, waiting. And then this sentence: 'To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart, the harpooners of this world must start to their feet out of idleness, and not out of toil.'"[674]

The thread that draws Peterson as pastor, poet, and harpooner together is this idea of idleness. And this idleness is of a sort that combines rest, attentiveness, and readiness in order that all may come to its fitting *telos*. "But if there is no harpooner in the boat," writes Peterson, "there will be no proper finish to the chase. Or if the harpooner is exhausted, having abandoned his assignment and become an oarsmen, he will not be ready and accurate when it is time to throw the javelin."[675] The modern pastor more often likens himself or herself to the captain of the ship but in actuality ends up as an oarsmen chained to the galleys. Connecting the metaphor of harpooner to the ministry of Jesus, Peterson writes:

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[673] Peterson recounts this story in two places: 1.) Peterson, *The Pastor*, 281-282; and 2.) Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: Eeerdmans, 1989), 24-25.
[674] Peterson, *The Pastor*, 281.
[675] Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 24.

> "The metaphors Jesus used for the life of ministry are frequently images of the single, the small, and the quiet, which have effects far in excess of their appearance: salt, leaven, see. Our culture publicizes the opposite emphasis: the big, the multitudinous, the noisy. It is, then, a strategic necessity that pastors deliberately ally themselves with the quiet, poised harpooners, and not leap, frenzied, to the oars."[676]

All this talk about the importance of idleness of a certain kind might sound contradictory to the earlier discussion on *acedia*. The sign, as argued in chapter three, that a pastor fails to behold beauty in a way that rightly orders his love towards the True and the Good is the absence of joy and the subsequent onset of a very old and perilous spiritual sickness: *acedia*. As mentioned, *acedia* has often been translated in to English as sloth, laziness, and/or boredom. It can just as easily mean without care or grief, carelessness, or lack of concern. Looking back at Aquinas, we noted that laziness is a possible symptom of *acedia* but is not *acedia*. In fact, as we explored, the pastor sick with *acedia* could be captive to an exhaustingly busy boredom.

In E. B. White's classic children's story, *Charlotte's Web*, Wilbur the pig laments that he cannot spin a web like his good spider friend Charlotte. Charlotte tells Wilbur to cheer up; Mr. Zuckerman the farmer keeps him well fed. Wilbur, points out Charlotte, does not need to trap his own food. Embarrassed by his daftness, Wilbur sighs, "You're ever so much cleverer and brighter than I am, Charlotte. I guess I was just trying to show off. Serves me right."[677] Charlotte returns to her late-afternoon weaving and proceeds to wax philosophical:

> "You needn't feel too badly, Wilbur," she said. "Not many creatures can spin webs. Even men aren't as good at it as spiders, although they *think* they're pretty good, and they'll *try* anything. Did you ever hear of the Queensborough Bridge?"
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> Wilbur shook his head. "Is it a web?"
>
> "Sort of," replied Charlotte. "But do you know how long it took men to build it? Eight whole years. My goodness, I would have starved to death waiting that long. I can make a web in a single evening."

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[676] Ibid., 25.
[677] E. B. White, *Charlotte's Web* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952), 60.

> "What do people catch in the Queensborough Bridge—bugs?" asked Wilbur.
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> "No," said Charlotte. "They don't catch anything. They just keep trotting back and forth across the bridge thinking there is something better on the other side. If they'd hang head-down at the top of the thing and wait quietly, maybe something good would come along. But no—with men it's rush, rush, rush, every minute. I'm glad I'm a sedentary spider."
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> "What does sedentary mean?" asked Wilbur
>
> "Means I sit still a good part of the time and don't go wandering over creation. I know a good thing when I see it, and my web is a good thing. I stay put and wait for what comes. Gives me a chance to think."[678]

Charlotte captures the modern sense of *acedia* that plagues pastors. And Wilbur raises the question that every pastor ought to be asking, "What does sedentary mean?" When we speak about the sedentary-ness of Charlotte, the idleness of the harpooner, the stillness of the poet, and the prayerfulness of Saul we are not talking about the sickness of *acedia*; rather, we are talking about the necessity of leisure, in the Classical sense of the word.[679] And by leisure Pieper means,

> "A mental and spiritual attitude—it is not simply the result of external factors, it is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a weekend or a vacation. It is, in the first place, an attitude of mind, a condition of the soul, and as such utterly contrary to the ideal 'worker' in each and every one of the three aspects under which it was analyzed: work as activity, as toil, as social function."[680]

Acedia, as either inactivity or over-activity, is at the root of our incapacity to a life of leisure.[681] Either way, the person plagued with *acedia* is refusing to be present to God and the realities of his or her life in such a way as to become fully human. It is, as Pieper argues, "that man renounces the claim implicit in his human dignity. In a word, he does not want to be as God wants him to be, and that ultimately means that he does not wish to be what he really, fundamentally,

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[678] Ibid., 60-61.
[679] In Greek the word for leisure is *skole*, and in Latin *scola*, root of the English word "school." See Josef Pieper, *Leisure and the Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru, rev. ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952; New York: Random House, 1963; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 19-20. Citations refer to the Ignatius edition.
[680] Ibid., 46.
[681] The "life of leisure' is a modern euphemism for laziness and slothfulness. The negative understanding of the 'life of leisure' has its roots, according to Pieper, in "economic ethos of the Middle Ages." Ibid., 44.

is."[682] This refusal to be oneself before God leads to despair.[683] How could it be otherwise? The pastor who refuses leisure as the basis of ministry inevitably will be overwhelmed with sadness. Sadness, because he or she has lost his or her ability to behold the beauty that orders love rightly: "The contrary of *acedia* is not the spirit of work in the sense of the work of every day, of earning one's living; it is man's happy and cheerful affirmation of his own being, his acquiescence in the world and in God—which is to say love."[684] And for the Christian, a world without love is life without the beauty that is convertible with Being (1 John 4).

Leisure, as the pastor yields to a right vision of beauty, ushers in an ever-unfolding realization that life exists as gift. The only appropriate response to this gift is thanksgiving, or what Pieper calls 'contemplative celebration.'[685] As duly noted, leisure is not the absence of activity. The central and defining activity of leisure is celebration. From this Pieper concludes, "The festival is the origin of leisure, and the inward and ever-present meaning of leisure."[686]

The heart of any 'festival' is a 'feast.' And the organizing act of the Church's life in Christ is a feast: the Lord's Supper (Lk. 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:23-25; Mk. 14:22-24; Mt. 26:26-28; Acts 2:42, 46).[687] Despite all the diversity in regards to practice and understanding, there exist considerable consistency across time and traditions. The Eucharist is "the principal celebration of the Christian people."[688] The celebratory nature of the Eucharist is derived from its eschatological nature. Many ancient liturgies of the Lord's Supper begin with the invitation, "Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God." In Luke, Jesus'

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[682] Ibid., 43-44.
[683] For a more complete discussion on *acedia* and despair see the section on Kierkegaard in chapter three.
[684] Pieper, *Leisure*, 45.
[685] Ibid., 48.
[686] Ibid., 49.
[687] For understanding the central role of the Eucharist in Christian worship as well the development of Eucharistic practice, see James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 229-248.
[688] Komonchak, Collins, and Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 342.

institution of the Eucharist and subsequent conversation with the disciples regarding their status in God's kingdom relates to a feast, "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you…a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom…" (Luke 22:28-29). The Eucharist is a celebration that anticipates and is a foretaste of the great heavenly feast (Rev. 19:17). And it is the pastor as poet that has the makings of a 'celebrant.' Speaking about the nature of what it means to be human, Alexander Schmemann writes:

> "We know that we were created as *celebrants* of the sacrament of life, of its transformation into the life in God, communion with God. We know that real life is 'eucharist,' a movement of love and adoration toward God, the movement in which alone the meaning and the value of all that exists can be revealed and fulfilled. We know that we have lost this Eucharistic life, and finally we know that in Christ, the new Adam, the perfect man, this Eucharistic life was restored to man. For He Himself was the perfect Eucharist; He offered Himself in total obedience, love and thanksgiving to God. God was His very life. And He gave this perfect and Eucharistic life to us. In Him God became our life."[689]

The central activity of the pastor is to preside at the celebration of the Eucharist. The disposition of a poet leads the pastor to the true life of leisure, to the rest and stillness that recovers the vision to behold the beauty of God, which alone can lead to the 'Great Prayer of Thanksgiving.' Ultimately, the pastor recovers sight to see the goodness of God in Christ's atoning sacrifice, "No claim regarding Christ can be excessive; everything that the Christian tradition says or attempts to say about him can be, at most, a joyous but inadequate attempt to span the infinity of the sign that he is: an *epektasis* of words, in and toward the Word."[690] The only possible response to this vision of God's deep love in and through the Son is the call and response to the *Sursum Corda*.[691]

The Pastor as Poet who Parties and Plays

At the heart of the gospel is an experience of beauty that begins in creation and crescendos in the cross-shattered Christ. As Hart explains, "The infinite motion

[689] Schmemann, *For the Life of the Word*, 34-35.
[690] Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 328.
[691] The Latin *sursum corda* ("Lift up your hearts") is the opening response to the liturgy for the Eucharist dating from the third century Apostolic Tradition.

by which God is God is made manifest in the way of Jesus into the world; God's glory is revealed in the dereliction of the cross; the economy of salvation is the presence in history of the Trinitarian *perichoresis*."[692] This experience of beauty, echoed in creation and made fully visible on the cross, is as necessary, even more so, than the air we breathe. Don Saliers writes, "There is something about being human that requires beauty, and not only for healing of our broken lives. There is something about the way we come to understand ourselves and our everyday world, through our senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting—and gestures, that causes us to seek and respond to what is beautiful and holy in this world."[693] This experience of beauty cannot easily be described by some theory. It is not easily measured or categorized. Part of the reason is that beauty operates at the liminal level. It makes its home in heaven and on earth. This is why, Saliers explains, we need "artists and the communities that receive them."[694] And it is artists, including poets, who are then, as Saliers describes, "Midwives to beauty."[695] It is poets who skillfully and carefully assist the arrival of beauty. Though this arrival comes fraught with all sorts of potential risks and dangers, it is an occasion for great joy because ultimately the full weight of God's glory draws near in human form.

As challenging as this midwifery may be, the greater danger, as we have already explored, is a world and parish without beauty. The true and the good lose their cogency and attractiveness. In a world without beauty, as we have seen in Balthasar, Being itself is lost. Incidentally, if this is so, then what it means to be a *human-being* is lost as well, because, as Hart writes, "One arrives in being not from some other place, not from some prior state of bliss or pleromatic glory, but always as one summoned from nothingness, framed by grace, receiving all while meriting nothing…as a kind of play, a kind of artistry for the sake of artistry."[696] Beauty acknowledges the truth of a transcendent reality. This 'unseen' reality is

[692] Ibid., 329.
[693] Don E. Saliers, "Beauty, Holiness, and Everyday," *The American Organist*, vol. 48, no. 6 (2014), 12.
[694] Ibid.
[695] Ibid.
[696] Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 251.

not one equal half to the 'seen' reality; rather, it is from which creation finds its existence possible and its *telos* intelligible. Beauty acknowledges the entirety of what is real—the seen and unseen, the temporal and eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18; Hebrews 11:1). Without the beauty of God, creation is incoherent and meaningless—it loses its logic and those who seek to live in just such a world lose their sanity by settling in to an irrational seriousness. Sanity is lost because the denial or loss of beauty is in actuality a rejection, conscious or otherwise, of reality—what is true and good.[697]

It seems fitting, as we have seen in the quote above, that creation, "summoned from nothingness, framed by grace," articulates its essential created-ness as a form of "play, a kind of artistry for the sake of artistry." Creation and re-creation express the recreation or leisure of God—God at play. The pastor as poet, in beholding the beauty of God, begins to image God as an artist at play. Though never frivolous, the pastor as poet's call always has a touch of whimsy that trumps and transforms darkness, by the power of the cross of Christ, into light. "For Christian thought," writes Hart, "delight is the premise of any sound epistemology: it is delight that constitutes creation, and so only delight can comprehend it, see it aright, understand its grammar."[698] As the poet plays in God's beautiful creation, he or she experiences delight and so is apprenticed to creation's grammar, learning to make poetry out of prose. The pastor as poet comes to see that Godly play brought the world into existence out of nothing. And the pastor as poet learns to see that above all "Christ," to quote again Gerald Manley Hopkins, still "plays in ten thousand places."

Roger Lundin, drawing on Karl Barth, makes the point, "'Art must be considered in an eschatological context,' Barth argues, 'because it is the specific external form of human action in which this cannot be made intelligible to us except as

[697] Here I am thinking of G. K. Chesteron's well known maxim, "The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits." Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Image, Doubleday, 2001, first published in 1908), 11.
[698] Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 253.

play.'"[699] None of the reigning metaphors for ministry invite this playfulness. Consequently, these metaphors fail to make intelligible what is elemental to the kingdom of God. The pastor as poet is able to see, and in many ways experience, the coming reign of the once and future King. This means that the pastor as poet at play is able to "accept the essential homelessness of human experiences east of Eden."[700] The pastor as poet is able to see the glory of God and the beauty of his kingdom, knowing that it all comes as gift to be received with gratitude, with joy. Therefore, with the *eschaton* in view, the pastor as poet at play learns "not to take present reality with final seriousness in its created being or in its nature as the world of the fall and reconciliation."[701] As Lundin says, quoting Barth, "'art plays with reality' by refusing to let present reality 'be a last word' in its fallen and partial state: [Art] transcends human words with eschatological possibility of poetry, in which speech becomes, in unheard-of fashion, an end in itself….'"[702] The metaphor of poet allows the pastor not to "view our work as a solemnly serious cooperation with God."[703] Rather, as Lundin, once again quoting Barth, writes, "we forever 'play in the peace of the father's house that is waiting for us…We cannot be more grimly in earnest about life than when we resign ourselves to the fact that we can only play.'"[704]

This project has coincided with the joy of raising two young, energetic, and imaginative boys. Daily I am reminded that children are natural poets. They have the wonderful capacity to see and delight in the world around them. A tree becomes a mast on a mighty sailing ship; rocks and sticks become one-of-a-kind collector's items; and a car can at any second transform into a spaceship passing through a meteor shower. Their minds are well tuned to see far below and beyond the literal. The eyes of their hearts, as St. Paul says, are more readily enlightened. They are able and eager to behold the glory of the Lord, not as

[699] Roger Lundin, *Believing Again*, 235. Lundin is drawing from Karl Barth, *Ethics* of 1928, ed. Dietrich Braun, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (New York: Seabury, 1981).
[700] Ibid., 235.
[701] Barth, *Ethics*, 506.
[702] Lundin, *Believing Again*, 235-236.
[703] Ibid., 236. Barth, *Ethics*, 504.
[704] Ibid., 236.

spectators but as participants, not as commentators but as choristers.[705] For my boys, as it should be for the pastor, the evidences of delighting in the beauty of God are dirt on their hands, bruises on their knees, ruddy cheeks, sticky fingers, and holes in their clothing. This is the life of the poet. This ought to be the life of the pastor. A bit wounded—wounded by beauty—and better for it.

Pastors, aided by the right constellation of metaphors, learn and unlearn to see. William R. Inge, former Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London (1911-1934), once remarked, "The gospel is not good advice but good news." For good advice, pastors as therapist, activist and managers will do just fine. But for good news—for someone who can see, encounter, and share the gospel—the church needs pastors as poets.[706] Where most metaphors for ministry offer *prescriptions* for the Christian life (good advice), the pastor as poet is often alone in offering *descriptions* of the Christian life (good news). The latter leads to a comprehensive understanding of life and ministry as a precious gift to be treasured, nurtured, and shared.

Finally, at seventeen George Herbert, not yet a pastor but already a budding poet, writes to his mother.[707] He vows, "That my poor abilities in poetry, shall be all and even consecrated to God's glory."[708] Herbert made good on this vow. As John Piper comments, "He writes all 167 poems of *The Temple* as a record of his life with God. Herbert was moved to write with consummate skill because his only subject was consummately glorious."[709] Or as Helen Wilcox puts it, "The

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[705] The boys share with poets the eyes to see the true, good, and beautiful. We have just finished Roald Dahl's *The BFG*. The Big Friendly Giant has captured the young orphan Sophie. He explains that he catches, catalogs, and then blows dreams into the windows of unsuspecting children. He tells Sophie that he can both *hear* and *understand* dreams. She finds this impossible to believe. The BFG responds, "The matter with you human *beans* is that they absolutely refusing to believe in anything unless they is actually seeing it right in front of their own schnozzles." Sophie quickly learns there are different ways of seeing, or possibly she unlearns to see as a 'human bean.' Roald Dahl, *The BFG* (New York: Puffin Books, [1982] 2013), 99.
[706] Quoted by John Jay Hughes, "Proclaiming the Good News," *First Things*, 3.12.09.
[707] As recounted by John Piper, *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 57.
[708] Joan Bennett, *Five Metaphysical Poets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 51.
[709] Piper, *Seeing Beauty*, 57.

subject of every single poem in The Temple is, in one way or another, God."[710] Put together, the central focus of Herbert's poems was God and God's beauty. And he believed that the glory of God as a borrowed flame would lead sinners home to God. In other words it is beauty that will draw us to the True, the Good, and to Being itself:

> True beautie dwells on high: ours is a flame
> But borrow'd thence to light us thither.[711]

Having never published a line of poetry in his lifetime, George Herbert was as much a pastor *as* poet as he was a pastor *and* poet. Either way the metaphor of poet deeply enriched his understanding of what it meant to be an effective and faithful pastor. Herbert ends the opening of *The Temple* with these lines, words that remind us that pastoral ministry is about arranging an encounter with a glorious "love so divine, so amazing," as Charles Wesley writes, that it "demands my soul, my life, my all":

> Thou, whose sweet youth and early hopes inhance
> Thy rate and price, and mark thee for a treasure;
> Hearken unto a Verser, who may chance
> Ryme thee to good, and make a bait of pleasure.
> A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies,
> And turn delight into a sacrifice.[712]

Conclusion

This project has argued that pastoral identity suffers, at the hands of modern metaphors for ministry, because those metaphors fail to cultivate the pastor's ability to behold the beauty of God. And the pastor who no longer beholds beauty fails to receive ministry as grace, as gift. The three key words in this have been *beauty*, *gift*, and *metaphor*. These are the terms to which this project has sought definition. Beauty is the apologetic for goodness and truth. Beauty is the revelation of the Triune God that wounds, transforms, and inflames the human heart with rightly ordered loves. The pastor who beholds the glory of the Lord understands that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *is* gift and is the giver of

[710] Helen Wilcox, *English Poems of George Herbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) xxi.
[711] Ibid., "Forerunners," 612.
[712] George Herbert, "The Church-porch," *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 50.

every good and perfect gift. Apart from a vision of God's glory, the pastor experiences, among other things, a lost friendship with the God who creates, redeems, and sustains all things. Metaphor, as more than simply discourse, has an aesthetic and bodily basis that shapes pastors in such a way to behold the beauty of God. This project has had the modest goal of helping demonstrate the role that metaphor plays in shaping pastoral identity, that somehow pastors are more than thinking-things and do-gooders. That somehow we pastors are aesthetic beings created to behold the glory of the Lord and that we are given a holy calling to make arrangements for our flocks to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).

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