



8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Phil 4:8)

In the years of my childhood, I considered the writing of men such as Shakespeare to be silly and trivial; and the great works of art by Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Rembrandt to be vulgar and without meaning; and the musical genius of Bach, Beethoven, Handel, and Mozart simply to be productions of erratic noise. I was not aware, at that age, it was I who was silly, trivial, vulgar, and capable of producing my share of meaningless noise. One day I came into the possession of a wonderful Mirror that revealed to me all of my ugliness and my ignorance of true beauty. ¹⁸ *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor 3:18)* ²³ *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (James 1:23-25)*

A leading purpose of real art is to mirror the beauty of God's Creation, and not to mar it. Unfortunately, that principle has been long forgotten in the minds and brushes of the modern artist who mimics the decadent Picasso instead of emulating the inspiration of Jean-François Millet. The modern novelist, or playwright, has been conditioned to believe the more pornographic material he can include, the better. And the great patterns for hymns and uplifting music of which the Book of Psalms are the ultra-standard example have been rejected and discarded as quaint, old-fashioned, and not capable of helping us to "find our groove" – whatever on earth THAT means. So our great and classic hymns of the past gather dust as the modern church opts for the very music that cannot lift our souls to the gates of Heaven, or glorify the God of Beauty and Order at all. The church has chosen to follow the ways of the world in music, teaching, worship, and community. How sad would be the ancient fathers of the church and the Great Reformers of the 15th and 16th centuries who gave their bodies to be burned in order to preserve truth and reverence in worship!

When I go shopping for commentaries of the Bible, I never purchase one of those written in the modern day. I always select those that are perhaps at least one hundred years old. Perhaps that is why my writing itself is a bit quaint. But I find that the works of older and more ancient writers are not infected with ambition for wealth, for political acceptance, or denominational compromise.

Shakespeare was not especially considered to be a religious writer in his day, but today, the critics would complain of far too much biblical content and too little of "what's happening now." He was a baptized Anglican who wrote in the purity of the Elizabethan age. His works are colored throughout with biblical paraphrases and Book of Common Prayer language. Of course, Shakespeare needed more words to tell the same meaning of a single line of Scripture since Shakespeare was human and not divine. God, after all, is the Master Author and capable of the most exalted of the writers skill – presenting truth in the most concise manner unlike the verbosity of human writers. The King James, like Shakespearean plays, is written in a cadence and meter that facilitates memory – unlike the commercial rags that pass for the Bible in modern times such as the ESV, NIV, NASB, etc.

Those who are raised up on the King James Bible will have little difficulty in understanding the writing of Shakespeare for it is written in the same exalted and majestic Elizabethan language - the only such language fit to glorify God and honor Him. By the way, every language has a reverential dialect that is used for legal instruments and, sometimes, for the worship of God. Let us look at some of the quotes of Shakespeare with the object of finding a biblical parallel:

That most Holy institution God ordained in Eden to mirror the image of His Church is found in Genesis 2:24 – *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* Now observe how our old friend William Shakespeare expresses the same Act V, Scene ii, line 357 of Henry Fifth: *God, the best Maker of all marriages, Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one! As man and wife, being two, are one in love.* It is more likely Shakespeare learned this principle from God rather than God learning it from Shakespeare. Men generally KNEW and read the Bible in his day!

Another quote from Henry V, IV, viii, 106: *O God, thy arm was here: And not to us, but to thy arm alone, Ascribe we all!* The King James renders the same meaning more beautifully: *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* (Psalm 115:1)

Yet another from Richard II, III, ii, 54: *Not all the water in the rough rude sea Can wash the balm from an anointed king.* The KJV says: *And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?* (1 Sam 26:9)

There are countless other similar references in the writings of Shakespeare that stand on biblical principles – in fact thousands – but time and space are insufficient to go further in this devotion.

No one doubts the sculptured beauty of the statue of David by Michelangelo. Such a work was not executed overnight, but after long hours of intense study of the human form in which God created man. The detail of every proportional limb and muscle is precise. This is so because Michelangelo believed true art should attempt to re-create the beauty of God's own.

There is, I believe at the Louvre in Paris, a sculpture that depicts, in perfect dimension, the Hand of God in forming man. One can visualize the touch of the great

Artist of Heaven as He forms man from clay. Rodin, who was the sculptor, said: *When God created the world, it is of modeling He must have thought first of all.*

Art, up through the Renaissance, gave evidence of greater and growing skill at accurately representing the beauty of God's Creation. The artist had always strived, from the cave drawings to the ancient icons, to accurately show the beauty and detail of God's work. But with the advent of so-called modern art, art devolved into a sad morass of degradation and decadence – led by such men as Picasso.

Who would dare claim that the work of da Vinci was not touched by divine inspiration. He was seven years in painting the Last Supper mural on the walls of the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, Italy. This art piece went a step further than all previous works of art in several categories. For example, this painting captures, not only da Vinci's best sense of the scene in the Upper Room, but also an instant in time – the moment Jesus said, *One of you shall betray me!* The shock and surprise on the faces of the Apostles is remarkable. They wondered *Is it I?* demonstrating that man knows not his own heart, but God does! Furthermore, da Vinci employed a new technique called "Point Perspective." All lines on the floor and ceiling converge to a point in Eternity just behind the Mind of Christ. Due to this perspective, all eyes (as da Vinci intended) cannot help being drawn directly to Christ at first glance. How many artist of our day are capable of such thought and meaning. Instead, in our day, devolution of beauty is the object instead of evolution of it. Degeneracy is the goal, and not the beauty of God's Creation. Satan is very busy in every field of art, isn't he?

I consider music to be the language of the spirit and, if so, we have very poor spirits in our day. I have read that the character of a nation is evinced by its quality of music. If so, it is no wonder that we have become a nation of poorly educated college graduates, druggies, confused genders, etc. I do not believe that degenerate music led to these shameful circumstances, but that the shameful character of our people has created the degeneracy in music. Even the church itself has opted for heavy metal music whose lyrics are commensurate to the sound created. Instead of trying to dress in a manner to express reverence and dignity, we have chosen 'casual Sundays' and 'beach-wear Wednesdays'. Where is the limit to these vulgar fashions?

Johann Sebastian Bach began, and ended, every musical score with the Latin words, "Soli Deo Gloria!" meaning to the glory of God. Why did he do so? Because Bach believed he was inspired by God to write his scores thinking himself unworthy to write such music on his own.

We all have dreamed and wondered at the beauty of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." It has the aire of Heaven enfolded in its melodic notes. Few people realize that its composer, Vivaldi, was a priest who wrote his music to raise money to provide for his orphanage for girls. There was no motivation in Vivaldi's heart to acquire a Gold or Platinum label, but only to provide for the needs of homeless young ladies who nobody wanted in olden Europe.

True art lifts our souls and places our feet on Higher Ground. Beautiful music on rainy days, glorious colors of pastoral scenes on canvas during evening hours of growing darkness, and beautifully represented stories that reflect God's image in written masterpieces during long, lonely hours are the purpose and object of true art – not to mar and disfigure the very Face of God and His beautiful Creation.