

Faith in a doubtful space

An introduction to the idea of faith as an artistic praxis in a contemporary environment

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

This dissertation is an examination of the idea of faith as an artistic praxis; as a contemporary practice. It deals with the issue of religious based artwork and its relevance in a contemporary environment that is influenced by postmodern critique. It debates the polarizing issues that arise when trying to reason religious based artwork as contemporary. This thesis is a Theo-Philosophical study of how the method of faith has developed from religious based artwork and evolved into a faith-based praxis, rather than a religious practice. From a Christian point of view, I discuss the empirical experiences of my practice and the issues that surfaced during my observations. In addition, this study includes the setback of doubt experienced in the process of artmaking and the artwork it engendered. From the perspective of my faith, I assign this experience of doubt to my Postmodern influence and how the differences between the method of faith and postmodern critique creates artistic tension. After deliberating the causes and consequences of this existential grapple; through my practice and the theory revised, I reason how my faith-based praxis can be viewed in a contemporary sense.

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Introduction

In the fourth year of my BA Fine Arts degree, I created a body of work titled *Life Source One* (2015) that was based on the creative acts of God in Genesis chapter one. My practical was a self-reflexive project that examined creativity and faith as a parallel experience in artmaking. The printmaking technique; mezzotint¹, was the ideal medium to convey the complex relation between faith and creativity. It was through this technique that I meditated on the root of my faith and systematically materialized these meditations via my printmaking method. Choosing to use the Bible as a source of meditation helped to navigate through personal meditation of faith and identity, while using creativity as a form of reflection. Though I had opted for a traditional printmaking technique, my method deviated from its conventional printing process. Instead of producing a newly rocked and burnished brass plate for each image, I had chosen to produce all images from a single brass plate (fig. 1).

After producing eight different images according to the order of Genesis chapter one, the brass plates' shape and balance became dramatically altered. Overtime, it had maintained its 15cm x 15cm ratio, but instead of retaining its original flat surface, it had drastically warped into an off-balanced curvature (fig. 2). The lasting effect of the printmaking process had left the brass plate divergent to its original state. My repetitive rocking and burnishing, inking, wiping and rolling of the printing press, had transformed the plate into something other than a printing plate. The plate itself had become an embodiment of the process. Once I had finished my body of work, it became clear that the focal point of the work was not the printed images, but the lasting effect that the printing process had on the plate. The plate had become a synergized symbol of faith, meditation and artistry, while the prints were mere evidence of its creation.

Though my printed images showed reimagined etches of verse to verse depictions of God's creative act, it was my act of will and artistry that reflected my identity in faith. After contemplating faith and its relevance in the artistic process, I questioned whether creativity and faith could be related or, potentially, a shared act.

¹ To get a better understanding of the mezzotint process, see link to Youtube channel of printmaker Guy Langevin's silent demonstration (Marco Bedo 2014) [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX47mOt8NE4>

So far, in this introduction, my use of the word ‘faith’ has been broad and apologetic when specifying theistic belief. This was intentional, because it was the way I approached faith during the exploration of *Life Source One* (2015). It is only once my practical had ended and I had reached a concluding question that I sought to understand the term and its use. If I were to continue my broad and apologetic approach to faith, I could refer to a dictionary’s definition; stipulating faith as “trust; strong belief; unquestionable confidence” (Oxford University Press 1998. Sv. ‘faith’). I could interpret this definition as purely Humanist; inferring that faith is an outdated term for patriotism or fanaticism. But my Humanist views come second to my Christian belief and would be a profound misrepresentation of my Christian understanding of what faith is. Though I do not deny that my views on art are influenced by a Postmodern perspective, [which I credit to my experience of academia as a visual art student], my identity as a Christian lies within having faith and acting on it. However, I believe that acting on a Postmodern ideology is no different to acting on Christian belief. This led me to assess whether my Postmodern education and Christian belief had an equal effect on my artistic process.

In his first chapter, Paul Tillich’s² Theo-Philosophical interpretation of faith, titled, *The Dynamics of Faith*, asserts that faith is a “centered act” of a “total personality” which originates from the human mind (1957: 4). However, the “total personality” always has an “ultimate concern” to motivate the “centered act” (Tillich 1957: 4). This means that any “ultimate concern”, whether it be theistic, pantheistic, polytheistic or atheistic could encourage a “centered act” or act of faith. Commercially, faith has primarily been associated with organised religion, but Tillich takes it further by introducing humanist examples, such as; nationalism and patriotism. If this is the case, then faith could be pervasive in any “centered act” of one’s “total personality”, which could insinuate that humanist ideologies are adjacent to religion. However, if one was to relate a *centered act* to that of an artist, one could assume that the *total personality’s ultimate concern* would influence the artistic act. Additionally, this could suggest that an artistic act is a *centered act*, in itself.

Tillich summarized his description of an act of faith as an “act of a finite being who is grasped by and turned to the infinite” (1957: 18). An artistic act can be categorized as a *finite* act, for it is

² Paul Johannes Tillich (1886-1965), was widely known as one of the most prominent Protestant philosophers/theologian’s of the 20th century (Tillich 1957: iv).

limited to the artist's creative abilities, but "the infinite participates beyond the limitations of the finite act" (Tillich 1957:18). Here, one can surmise that the participation of the *infinite* is where the *ultimate concern* engendered its influence. In *Life Source One* (2015), the participation of the *infinite* was my belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, but I had so much to learn about an *unseen* God³ that functions on human faith. And so, the will to understand this concept of faith became a starting point in grasping the need to know God. This generated my *ultimate concern*, which became the *centered* [artistic] *act* of my *total personality*.

But where there is faith, there is potential doubt. Tillich infers that "faith is uncertain insofar as the infinite to which it is related is received by a finite being" (1957: 18). The collective meaning of *finite* is limit or restriction (Oxford quick reference dictionary & thesaurus 1998. Sv. '*finite*').), whereas *infinite* means limitless or endless (Oxford quick reference dictionary & thesaurus 1998. Sv. '*infinite*').). Because a human life span has a beginning and an end, metaphysically and literally, humanity is a limited existence. Therefore, every human act or experience will be *finite* dominant. This makes the idea of the *infinite* a superior and mystical concept. Furthermore, even if the goal of an act is to reach the *infinite*, there will always be elements of uncertainty, which is a natural dynamic of *finite* behavior (Tillich 1957: 18). Tillich asserts that because of this, "elements of uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted." (1957: 18). But in addition, he adds; that despite the encroachment of doubt, there is an element in faith that is imperative to the character of faith (Tillich 1957: 18). He states:

"This element of uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted. And the element in faith which accepts this is courage. Faith includes the element of immediate awareness which gives certainty and an element of uncertainty. To accept this is courage. In the courageous standing of uncertainty, faith shows its dynamic character. If we try to describe the relation of faith and courage, we must use a larger concept of courage than that which is ordinarily used. *Courage as an element of faith is daring self-affirmation of one's own being in spite of the powers of "nonbeing" which are the heritage of everything finite. Where there is daring and courage, there is the possibility of failure. And in every act of faith this possibility is present. The risk must be taken. Whoever makes his nation his ultimate concern needs courage in order to maintain this concern. Only certain is the ultimacy as ultimacy, the infinite passion as infinite passion. This is a reality

³ Colossians 1: 15; "He is the image of the Invisible God, the first born of all creation" and Hebrews 11:27; "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen" (The Bible).

given to the self with his own nature. It is as immediate and as much beyond doubt as the self is to the self. It is the self in its self-transcending quality” (Tillich 1957: 19).

Without *courage*, faith could not withstand the possibility of doubt. *Courage*, is the element of faith that must come from the *total personality* before an *ultimate concern* could be considered before the act. *Courage* is the element that makes the *total personality* aware that doubt is an option, but an option to refuse. Moreover, within the act of faith, the element of *courage* is what stands in the way of the *finite* to reason doubt into the dynamic.

During *Life Source One* (2015), I had encountered the option to doubt. There were moments where I reasoned whether I could produce multiple images of different verses of Genesis one, from one plate. I reasoned that I had never worked with the mezzotint technique before and to produce prints in such a limited and restricted way could lead to failure. But despite the potential failure, I chose *courage* over the option of doubt and carried out my artistic act. This is an example of the literal encounter with doubt, which plagued my artistic ability to act out my “self-transcending quality” (Tillich 1957: 19).

However, once I had overcome the doubt in my ability to fulfill the artistic task and began to produce artwork according to my unique printmaking method, a new form of doubt evolved overtime. It was not a practical grapple with doubt, but rather, of an epistemic nature. I realised that although my work was dealing with religion and an examination of personal faith, its epistemology did not, and could not, coagulate with my academic methodology. Over the 5 years of studying Visual Arts (Fine Arts), I had grown accustomed to a Postmodern theory that was primarily examined from a Humanist perspective. Other movements and philosophies (e.g. the Sublime, Romanticism, Modernity, Modernism etc.) were revised in the earlier years of my undergraduate studies, but Postmodern philosophy of a Humanist paradigm remained the dominant method when addressing contemporary art.

During the time that I worked on *Life Source One* (2015), I focused on the experience of faith being exercised as my artistic praxis. And because this was part of my *concern*, it became my *centered act*. But while *Life Source One* (2015) was more of a pragmatic exercise with an unpredictable outcome, I had an additional body of work that I started to create as an aftermath of *Life Source One* (2015). This time it was less pragmatic and more meditative. It started as a simple drawing

of floating debris or remains of an unrecognizable nature, which progressed into masses of suspended rocks. The drawings were apocalyptic in nature, yet it could still be related to Genesis one. It was destructive yet tranquil, vast yet contained, fractured yet whole, and order out of chaos. The debris and its signified brokenness resembled a breaking of something that once existed. There is no indication as to what it could have been, but the broken pieces that resembled shrapnel and stone spoke of a loss of foundation (fig. 3).

I did not view these rock drawings as separate to *Life Source One* (2015), but rather as a continuation of it. What started out as a faith examining praxis had progressed into a wrestle with doubt. When doubt intrudes on faith, it becomes a misplaced token of *concern*. The *ultimate concern* that was once unthreatened by failure, loses its foundation when an opposing concern intrudes on its *centered act* (Tillich 1957: 19-20). Though I was examining my faith through an artistic act, I was struggling with the ability to explore it in a contemporary sense. My views on contemporary art and foundation as an artist were influenced by a Postmodern attitude, but the foundation of my identity and life-defining views as an individual is the Bible and Christian faith. The two, however, are opposing epistemologies. Postmodern philosophy thrives on atheism and pantheism, which is a platform for Humanist views, while Christianity is theistic and uses Theology as a catalyst for theistic reason. Without causing either view to compromise its *ultimate concern*, this makes it difficult to develop a potential method that could help in finding a common denominator between the two opposing beliefs. If either belief systems were to compromise its *ultimate concern* for the sake of cohesion, then the uncompromised belief's *ultimate concern* would become the compromised belief view's ultimate doubt; making *courage* inattentive to the *total personality*. This would cause an existential crisis, a loss of epistemic foundation and a falling away of faith.

A thought provoking book that highlights the dilemmas between the religious and the secular, is 'Belief or Non-Belief: A *confrontation*' (Eco & Martini 1997). The pamphlet sized book was compiled with eight chapters of questions and answers between renowned novelist and Professor,

Umberto Eco⁴, and Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini⁵ (1997: 3-6). The two were invited to participate in a dialogue on popular topics where secular and religious persons had opposing views. Eco viewed it as an exchange of opinions between a layman and a cardinal (Eco & Martini 1997: 14). However, in the introduction, both Martini and Eco make it clear that they were not interested in “refuting” or “tripping up” one another’s perspectives, but instead, sought to find a common ground (1997: 5). Throughout the book Eco was the main inquirer, while Martini attentively complied. This was not intentional, it was how the correspondence worked out between the two participants’ busy schedules. It was only by the seventh chapter that Martini had taken the opportunity to pose a believer’s question to the non-believer. Up until the seventh chapter, Eco had asked some hard questions about the Church’s ethical reasoning on abortion, the polarizing roles between the sexes, and the Christian Apocalypse (Eco & Martini 1997). But when Martini submitted his question, he asked where the layman find’s their illumination (Eco & Martini 1997: 76). The question went as follows:

“Dear Eco

I can now pose the question I wanted to ask in my last letter, the one I told you about. It concerns the basic ethical foundation for a layman in the framework of the “postmodern.” In more concrete terms: on what does he base the conviction and urgency of his moral behavior if, in creating an ethical system, he cannot call on metaphysical principles, transcendental values, or even universally valid categorical imperatives? Some readers have complained that our discussions have been too difficult, so I’ll put it even more simply: what guides the secular person who does not recognize a personal God, makes no appeal to an Absolute, yet claims and professes moral principles, principles so firmly held that this person would give his life for them, and uses those principles to determine what acts he will perform at any cost or will not perform under any circumstances? There are laws, certainly, but by what authority can they require something as great as the sacrifice of one’s own life? This is what I would like to reflect upon with you on this round of our exchange.” (Eco & Martini 1997: 76-77).

⁴ Umberto Eco (1932-2016), was foremostly known as a professor in semiotics at the University of Bologna. He was additionally a renowned philosopher, novelist and literary critic (Cox: 1997: 3).

⁵ Carlo Maria Martini (1927-2012), was a cardinal of the Catholic Church and the late Archbishop of Milan, Italy. (Cox: 1997: 6).

The answer to Martini's question is not the featured point of departure here, but rather a valid point made in Martini's exchange. So far, throughout Eco and Martini's dialogue, the posed questions challenged theistic reason from an atheist's perspective. But in chapter seven, for the first time, the dialogue challenged atheistic reason with a theist's perspective. In addition, there are two new aspects to consider from this development; one: each perspective makes valid points when challenging each other's concerns, and two: both Eco and Martini question each other from a place of *ultimate concern*. The main prospect of Martini's question is that, instead of him trying to understand Postmodern reason by attempting to reason as a Postmodern thinker, he used his theistic reason to find a universal semantic that both participants practiced from their individual *ultimate concern*. By the end of the book, they had managed to approach each other as equals; valuing each other's alternative perspectives. But neither one of them agreed that the other was right and their perspectives remained unchanged by one another's questions. They parted from the dialogue with their morals intact; maintaining the foundation of their respective *ultimate concern* (Eco & Martini 1997: 85-98).

Tillich's hypothesis on faith takes it out of the organized religion context and reframes it as a universal experience. This means that the experience of faith is not only reserved for the theist but can be experienced from an atheistic paradigm too. This removes the stigma that religion and Postmodernism are unrelatable concepts, but rather affirms that they have a basic common ground. Instead of viewing them as opposing epistemes, one can identify them as belief systems that function on their *ultimate concern*, which makes them opposing faith practices.

When associating my artistic act with my faith, I battled with my personal belief as a Christian and my Postmodern academic methodology as an artist. Though I had tried to merge my two opposing ideologies, it resulted in a collision of epistemic foundations which caused both methods to deteriorate. This propelled my work into uncertainty, which produced an artistic act of doubt. However, this was not an experience of personal doubt, but rather doubt in the Christian faith's place in contemporary art. In James Elkins'⁶ conclusion in '*On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*' (2004), he reassesses his research on the need for religion or spirituality in fine

⁶ James Elkins (1955) is formally known as an American art historian, critic and professor at the Art Institute of Chicago (www.jameselkin.com).

art. What he closes with is a problematic resolve that leads to more questions than answers; he states:

“I have tried to show why committed, engaged, ambitious, informed art does not mix with dedicated, serious, thoughtful, heartfelt religion. Wherever the two meet, one wrecks the other. Modern spirituality and contemporary art are rum companions: either the art is loose and unambitious, or the religion is one-dimensional and unpersuasive. That is not to imply the two sides should maintain their mutual mistrust, but that the talk needs to be very slow and careful. I would have loved to end this book with a prescription. I could have said, as sociologically minded writers do, that religious art and fine art are equal but different, so that there is no particular problem with the nonreligious nature of much current art. Or I could have proposed, as some art historians do, that religion is simply absent from much of contemporary art, and objecting to that absence amounts to objecting to the cultural condition in which we find ourselves. Or I could have argued that religious meaning is interwoven in all of modernism whether it is spoken of or not. Or I could have promoted some kind of mysticism or spirituality to take the place of religious talk. I could even have followed the lead of conservative politicians and religious spokesmen and said that contemporary art is godless and in need of systematic censorship and renewed faith. None of those solutions addresses the genuine difficulty of the subject. It is impossible to talk sensibly about religion and at the same time address art in an informed and intelligent manner: but it is also irresponsible not to keep trying. To paraphrase the passage from Blanchot I quoted earlier: the name God does not belong to the language of art in which the name intervenes, but at the same time, and in a manner that is difficult to determine, the name God is still part of the language of art even though the name has been set aside. That is the stubbornness and challenge of contemporary art.” (Elkins 2004: 15-16).

Elkins’ conclusion is not that different to my struggle. He is right to suggest that none of his solutions address the difficulty of the subject (Elkins 2004: 16). But amongst the possibilities and the uncertainties, maybe the problem is not the subject, but how we approach it. From my own perspective as a studied artist, Postmodern contemporary art makes sound sense in a Postmodern era. But religion is not completely irrelevant. It is still a part of humanity’s social dynamic and cultural evolution; which argues why its relevance is absent from contemporary art. My ability to produce faith-based art in a contemporary sense is futile. To integrate Christian faith-based art with Postmodern contemporary art is as controversial as inserting the Lord’s Prayer in the Koran. Although Postmodern contemporary art has nothing to do with Islam; it could just as well be

categorised as an independent faith. However, this is only if the perspective is based on faith-based observation.

The idea that an artistic act could be related to the act of faith creates an alternative Postmodern lens when observing the artistic process. By using Tillich's theory that faith is an *ultimate concern*, it broadens the observational scope of the alternative lens. It eliminates the notion that faith is alien to atheistic paradigms and can therefore be observed from a Postmodern Humanist perspective too. In addition, this means that atheist ideologies are also susceptible to doubt. The representation of doubt will always be the opposite of what the *total personality's ultimate concern* is. Its rendition would be that of what the *total personality* is ultimately unconcerned with, which would be associated with the very ideals that the *total personality* does not believe in. However, what is one *total personality's* disbelief, is another *total personality's ultimate concern*. And so, there is a paradox in the dynamic of faith and doubt. One person's doubt can be another person's faith. When we act on our faith or our doubt, its prognosis will be acted out. But how we choose to express our faith and doubt will project our *ultimate concern*.

In choosing to creatively act out my faith in the presence of doubt, I found my process produced fractured elements of my Christian background. The more I was concerned with understanding what these drawings of debris represented, the more I acted out on my concern creatively. However, I do not believe that this concern is ultimate, but rather a byproduct of my *ultimate concern*. In the process of acting out in faith, courage is needed to see the act carried out. If courage is absent, the element of doubt is an inevitable outcome and will hinder the *total personality's* ability to perform a *centered act* of faith. But when courage is introduced by the *total personality*, a battle between faith and doubt is created. A *centered act* of faith is not a basic orientated task but is an act that thrives on process. It is what drives the *total personality* to act according to its morals and convictions and wishes to see those morals and convictions realised. But what happens when a *centered act* imposes on the space of an opposing faith? This is the question that I aim to explore as part of my faith-based praxis. In attempt at grasping the question's actions, the act of faith and experience of doubt needs to be examined.

One such examination began with the Masters group August Review, titled '*Threshold*' (2017). I first showcased my suspended rocks on the walls of GUS (Gallery of the University of

Stellenbosch) as part of the ‘*Threshold*’ exhibition (2017). I had previewed my rock drawings on multiple assortments of paper and canvas but had never ventured further than the traditional use of paper until ‘*Threshold*’ (2017). It was after two weeks of drawing my rocks in the corner of the gallery that my faith meditation synchronized with the foundation of artistic reflection. My two-week project illuminated my struggle with practiced faith in an artistic context.

The architecture of the gallery played an equally important role when reflecting on the foundation of artistic faith. The preserved architecture of GUS is the only evidence that it was once a Christian church. Anything else that resembled a place of worship and reverence was now reserved for art, and its foundation had nothing to do with Christianity. But art had become the foundation and Postmodernism its faith. If art has become an act of faith, then there is no room for perspectives that are aligned with an opposing faith. If there is, then the opposing faith can only occupy the space of doubt. But it is not doubt in my faith that I aim to explore, for I continue to believe in its foundation. It is rather the faith of the gallery, and how my faith poses as doubt within its space. This is where the two faiths collide, and the foundations begin to crumble.

When reflecting on my artwork and its premise, the Bible is an important source of my artistic reflections. The use of rocks and stones, as subject matter, come from verses that identify the rock as God; “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, the Rock of my salvation.” (Psalm 89 vs 26.) and the stone as Jesus; “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.” (Isaiah 28 vs 6). There are multiple verses in the Old Testament and new, that distinguishes this aspect of God’s character as the foundation of faith. But the focal point of these Biblical reflections is on the *Rock* and the *Cornerstone*, and how these two Biblical metaphors embody’s the foundation of my artistic *ultimate concern*.

I. Methodology

My proposed key questions for this thesis are; ‘can an act of faith be an artistic praxis?’ and, if yes, ‘how would it function as contemporary art?’. ‘What are some of the main issues that would arise from this concept and how would these issues be negotiated?’. My aim is to negotiate spirituality,

in the form of faith, as a practical method of artistic praxis. This includes examining subjects that touch on phenomenological aspects such as the soul, meditation, consciousness and unconsciousness. Because my study deals with the personal interaction between an artist and their faith and how this influences their artistic process, this examination will be empirically based and subject to my experience as a faith abiding Christian in a contemporary environment. Due to reasoning my observations from the experience of my artistic praxis, this will be a practice-led study. At the start of my analysis, I intend to examine the practicalities of faith objectively, to construct a methodology of faith that will be used as an aid when analysing artworks. After this method has been delineated, we can begin to observe faith in an ideological setting. The primary ideology that will be the premise of our observation is Christianity. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, to give a better understanding of how I observe my faith in my artistic praxis; and secondly, because Christian-based artwork is a prime example of faith evolvment in art, making it a favourable ideology to examine the ins-and-outs of a faith-based praxis. Theological perspectives, Biblical exegesis and empirically-based philosophy will be the agents of my conceptual thinking. For this reason, my theoretical framework will be Theo-Philosophically based.

II. Methodology: Can an act of faith be an artistic praxis?

To explore the first question, a full analysis based on the study of Paul Tillich's *'Dynamics of Faith'* (1957), will be conducted in the first chapter. This will be an in-depth look at the idea of faith and how it is a personality-based practice. To help formulate my understanding of faith, the basic ideas of belief, identity, the duality of consciousness and unconsciousness, the conception of a god and practical application of faith will be reviewed to help define the construct of faith. Once the concept of faith is clearly defined and I know what to look for when reviewing artwork from a faith-based perspective, then I can begin to look at examples of artworks influenced by, and in the process of developing, Christian faith.

Chapter two will examine the second half of this question, where the hypothesis of faith in chapter one will be exercised when analysing artwork. Here, a brief look at the history of the development of Christian faith in art will be revised. This will consist of a number of artworks, pertaining to

key periods that issued faith development in art. The first period will be a summarised look at the three phases of the Byzantine era. This study will predominantly look at how art was an essential tool in developing the Christian religion. This entails the use of church architecture and motifs as a form of visual doctrine. In addition, this section is crucial in differentiating between religious art and faith-based art and grasping the transitional move of religious faith to personal faith.

The Renaissance period is a testament to this antithesis and was the beginning of religious rebellion in art. Its movement showcases the beginning of an end in religious and symbolic artwork that acted as representations of God and the heavenly realms. Here, the combination of Humanism and theism, conceptualised as motifs in a clerical environment will be analysed. A section of Michelangelo's (1475-1564) '*Sistine Chapel*' (1508-1512) and Raphael's (1483-1520) '*School of Athens*' (1509-1511), will be my point of reference for ecclesiastic artworks that ventured into new territory of personal faith. I will be discussing how philosophy was an integral aspect of the development and how it fostered the exploration of Humanism in correlation with Christian faith.

Once the differentiation between religious art and faith-progressive art has been clarified and the transition of religious representation to faith development has been defined, Rembrandt's personal affiliation with religion and belief will be introduced. However, unlike my study of the crossover between the Byzantine and Renaissance, this section will not be a brief summary of Rembrandt's artwork in relation to his era, but rather an extensive exploration of Rembrandt's personal relation to Christian faith in his artwork. With the aid of chapter one's analysis of faith, we can focus on the identity of the artist and his interaction with faith when reviewing his work. The chosen artworks for this point of study will be, '*The stoning of Stephen*' (1625), the paintings of '*An Old woman reading*', '*Christ in the storm of the Sea of Galilee*' (1633), '*The Incredulity of St Thomas*' (1634), '*The Descent from the Cross*' (1633), '*The Prodigal Son in the Brothel*' (1637) and the '*Return of the Prodigal Son*' (1669). All the works mentioned will be the point of reference when delving into Rembrandt's association with Christian faith.

The final phase of this question will be addressed in the form of Makoto Fujimura's commissioned project, titled '*The Four Holy Gospels*' (2011)⁷, for the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible.

⁷ Side note: The official release date of '*The Four Holy Gospels*' artwork remains unclear. The release date of the book was 2011, but the release date of the exhibition seems to change with different sources. Because the release date of the book is consistent with varied sources, I have used it as a date of reference for the artworks (ESV *The four holy gospels-cloth over board 2011*).

Fujimura is an instrumental artist to study when defining faith as an artistic praxis. The whole premise of his work functions on personal spiritual proclivity and his identity is integral to his artistic process. What makes his work interesting, is that his identity is an integration of his bicultural background; a combination of Western and Eastern education and his Christian faith. In the series of *'The Four Holy Gospels'* (2011) he addresses the lack of visual theology in contemporary art. He briefly questions its relevance in a 21st century, as well as the reasons for its return. The artworks of *'The Four Holy Gospels'* (2011) is an ideal model on how faith can be pervasive as an artistic praxis. Fujimura's concern for visual theology is an introduction to how an artist, who happens to be Christian, views their relevance contemporarily.

By the end of chapter one, a clear and concise understanding of how faith works, in a practical sense, will make up our method of faith-based observational study. By the end of chapter two, the application of this method, in a visual arts setting, should clarify how art can be viewed from a faith-based perspective. It is after this systematic use of faith as a Theo-Philosophical method of visual studies that we can define faith as an artistic praxis. This will help contextualise the answer to our first question.

III. Methodology: How would it function as contemporary art? 'What are some of the main issues that would arise from this concept and how would these issues be negotiated?'

Fujimura's art review sets the tone for the third chapter, where my artwork and my artistic praxis will be introduced. The artworks that will be discussed in this chapter, are drawings and prints that I created as sequels to the *'Life Source One'* (2015) prints. Unlike my mezzotints, my sequel series was not about discovering my faith through visual theology, but rather about my struggle with faith in a contemporary environment. The drawings that I produced during this artistic struggle were less of an artistic proclamation, acting more like evidence of an artistic crisis of the soul (or psyche). In this chapter I will explain how the cause of this crisis came from my failure to conceive an avenue where the objectives of contemporary art and faith-based art could coexist. Part of this discussion will address my struggle with identifying a common ground where postmodernism and faith can coexist, as well as how the consequences of this crisis induced a phase of doubt in my praxis. I will discuss how this translated through the aesthetic of my drawing

and method of production. This section will address some of the key issues that surfaced during the development of my faith-based artistic praxis.

However, when I changed the environment and surface in which I produced these drawings, it began to change my perspective of my crisis. Drawing my rocks on the gallery walls of GUS engendered an alternative to my problem. It is here where my allegorical interpretation of rocks being drawn in the corner of the gallery, and how the symbolism of its space and my grapple with faith and doubt, spawned the idea of faith being an artistic praxis. In essence, this is where I begin to reason that non-religious ideologies can also generate faith. It is here where I reason that, in a general sense, all artists identify's with some sort of belief. Whether it is religious, atheistic, theistic, agnostic or nihilistic, it is still a belief. As it will show in chapter one, belief cannot thrive without faith. This is the section that will address how my artistic issues could be negotiated.

Furthermore, in a series of prints in the form of mezzotint and dry point, I will conclude the final phase of my faith-artistic praxis development. I will be showcasing one of my plates from my second [and new] series of prints that I produced as an act of conceptual evolvement. The print making process that I describe in this section embody's my view of art from the perspective of my faith. It is through this view that I unpack the process of my practice according to my faith-based praxis. It is here that I explore the notion that faith is naturally part of an artist's praxis, whether we perceive it or not. Although faith may be construed as a phenomenological subject, I believe that it is rather a habitual part of human nature; on the basis that to believe in something is primordial when formulising the human identity (Jung 1958: 63). This will comprise of a detailed examination of my printmaking process, according to its theo-philosophical underpinnings and will touch on the question "How would they function as contemporary art?".

IV. Literature Review

Because of the complex nature of this method, instead of delineating my literature review here, I've decided to introduce each chapter with the literature pertaining to its framework. This is to make the reading of the development of my concept easier to follow.

V. Aim

To define what art is, or assert a superior perspective of art, is not my objective. I do not profess my method of artistic praxis or faith as a form of absolutism, because I believe that art and faith is relative to the one experiencing it. I do, however, recognise the potential for the method of faith as an artistic praxis, and believe it to be a concept worth the exploration and development. Additionally, I do believe that Christian faith has become a hard concept to crack as contemporary art, mainly because its ideology opposes Postmodern attitude and its methodology can easily be related to Modernism. But, because Christianity has been overlooked in the art scene for some time, I believe that we have lost out on its development as a religion, culture and faith, causing us to lose sight of its relevance as a contemporary subject (Elkins 2004: 16). However, it has the potential to develop, which makes it a subject worth exploring. In order for this to happen, an alternative hypothesis to Postmodern philosophy needs to be forged. This is my aim for this thesis. I aim to examine the idea of faith as an alternative method of visual art observation and praxis, so that there is potential for non-secular belief to thrive as a contemporary discourse in visual art.

VI. Conclusion

For my conclusion I will reflect on what I have written and why I have chosen to conduct my study as an introduction to the idea of faith as an artistic praxis. This will lead up to whether I have successfully addressed my topic and accomplished what I have aimed for. Additionally, I will address key issues that surface during my study and propose whether these issues are conducive to researching the topic further. I will also consider, to whom this method of artistic praxis may be beneficial and how it could be relevant from a contemporary stance. I hope to conclude that this method of praxis could be a potential platform to explore any life defining-belief and religion as a visual artistic venture. By the end of this section, I expect my conclusion to clearly delineate whether this concept of faith as an artistic praxis can work contemporarily and whether it is worth examining further.

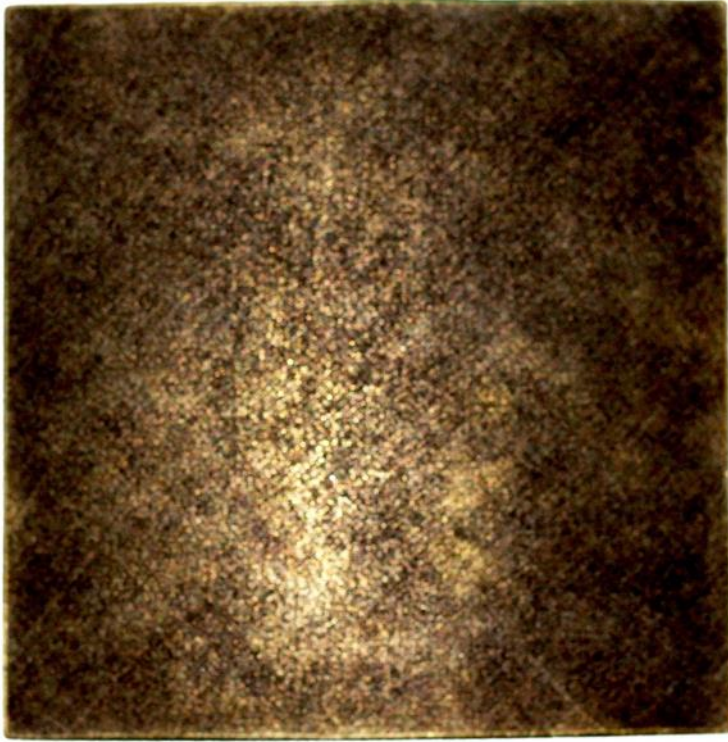


Figure 1. Photograph of brass plate used for mezzotint prints, *Life Source One*. 2015.

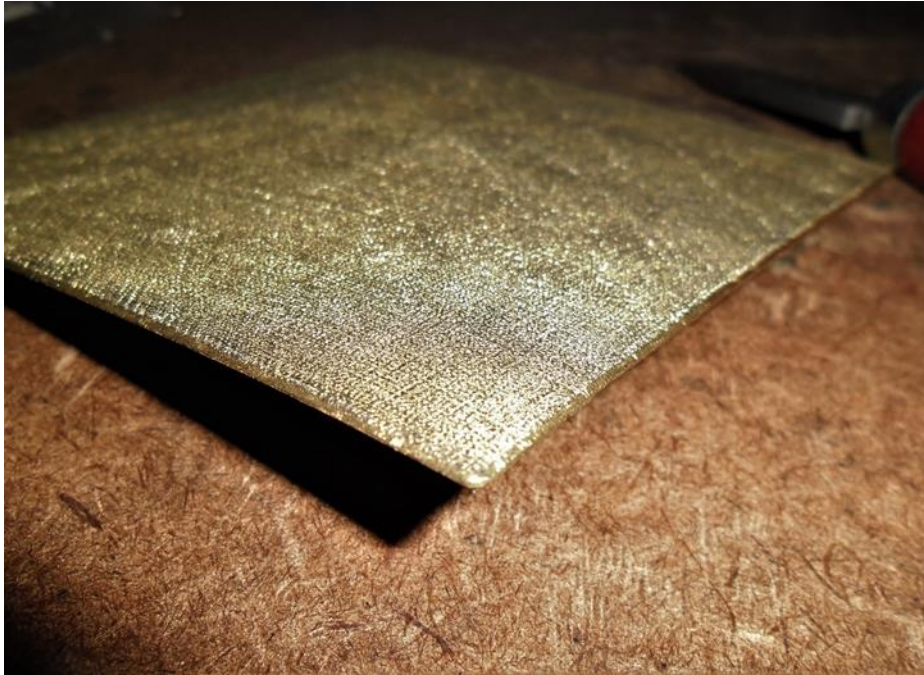


Figure 2. Carmen Maria Titus, Photograph of brass plate as it begins to warp, *Life Source One*. 2015.

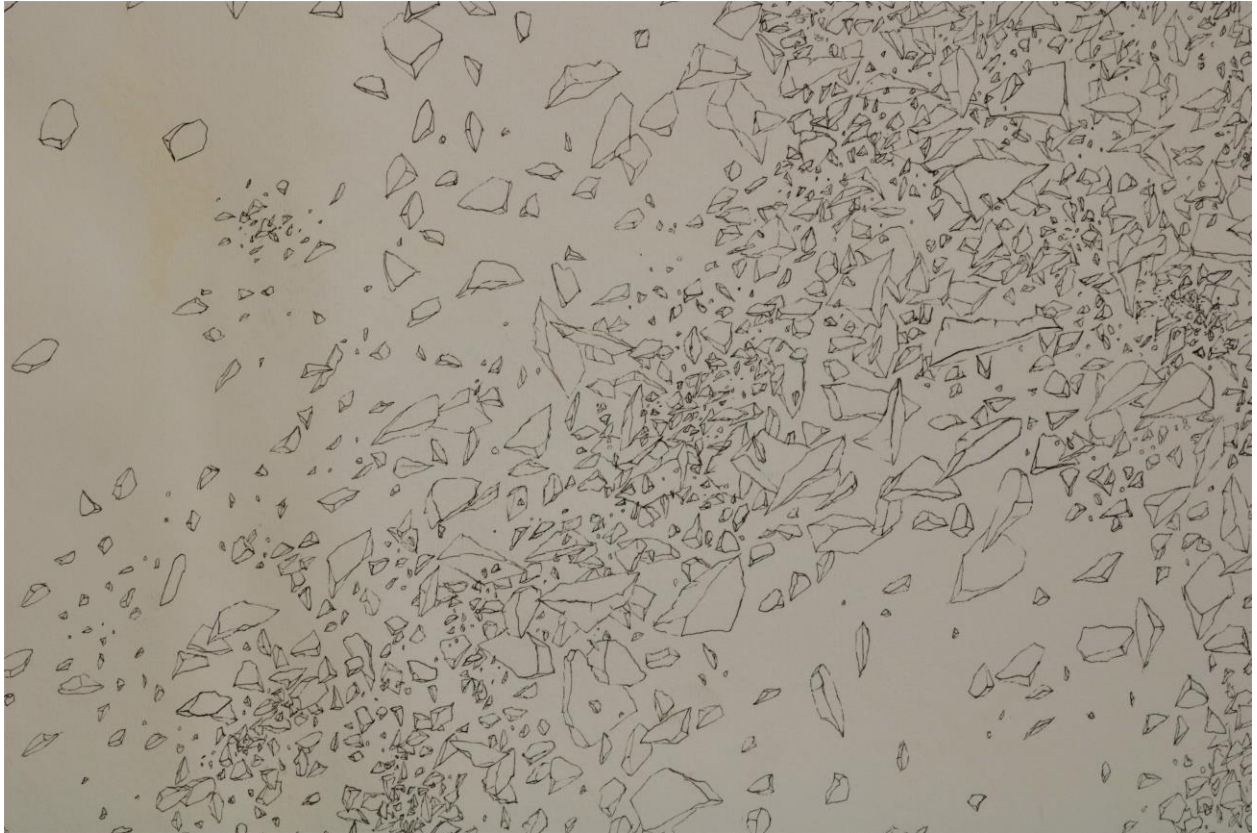


Figure 3. Carmen Maria Titus, Close-up of rock process drawing. 2017. Felt pen in black ink on Fabriano, 42.0 x 59.4cm.

Chapter One:

Defining faith as a praxis

1.1. A brief literature review of chapter one

Before an artistic praxis can be reviewed as an act of faith, an overview of what faith is and how it is practiced must be visited first. In this chapter, the analysis of faith will not be examined as a specific religious practice. The reason being, if an ideology is singled out as the originator of faith practice, then this chapter will be about how faith is experienced by the specified ideology. This is not the objective here. The aim of this chapter is to understand the inspiration behind faith and its personal motivates. However, to gain a general understanding of faith, it needs to be analysed at its most basic empirical human function.

Tillich accomplishes this with his theory on the '*Dynamics of Faith*' (1957). Although his analysis is a synthesis of theological and philosophical thinking, his fundamental definition of faith is a practical account of belief and its influence on an individual's identity, and how this motivates an act of faith. His analysis focuses on personal experience rather than congregational piety. Although he does mention the importance of social influence, his main premise is the individual's experience of their belief that inspires faithful devotion (Tillich 1957).

To better understand his approach, Tillich's prelude to an act of faith is categorised as three empirical phases; *ultimate concern*, *total personality* and *centered act*. His unique terminology detours the reader from religious perceptions of faith and encourages an objective view. However, these terms are his hypothesised definitions, used to construct a systematic guide on how faith works. Nevertheless, his stance is favourable when examining faith from a practical standpoint, which assists in identifying the basic principles of faith. In this chapter *ultimate concern* will be reviewed as 'the beginning of faith: a consequence of belief', *total personality* as 'how faith develops: the person behind the faith' and *centered act* as 'how faith works'. In addition to these subheadings, I have included a section titled, '*faith and the makings of gods*'. I have added this section to elaborate on how the individual's faith cannot exist without a god and

the god cannot exist without the individual's faith. This details the relationship aspect between the inferior (finite) and superior (infinite) dynamic of faith (Tillich 1957).

Furthermore, Tillich does not firstly assign the actions of faith to religious devotion, but incorporates secular experiences such as patriotism, societal fidelity and philosophical convictions to his analysis (1957). As a result, belief has been framed loosely, broadening the boundaries in which belief and faith can be observed. This broad perspective makes it easier to observe the course of faith, without the interference of institutional terminology and ideals. In addition, this leaves room to observe faith as a personal experience rather than a mass event.

Because Tillich's analysis is practical in observation, the phenomenological aspect of faith is vague. However, when exploring the personal element of faith, Carl Gustav Jung's⁸ *'Undiscovered Self'* (1958) is a complementary study when examining the idea of Tillich's *total personality* as a spiritual activity. Jung's analysis of self-awareness ventures into the phenomenological sphere of self exploration, which is beneficial in understanding how faith communicates from a personal level. In addition to this study, I will be addressing the prospect that this method of faith could be categorised as a Modernist view. I will be using David Ray Griffin's, *'God and Religion in a Postmodern world: Essays in Postmodern philosophy'* (1989), to support my claim and will briefly argue why I view this method as a contemporary topic and not solely Modernist. Once the practicalities of faith and its origin have been delineated and the relation of artistic practice has been introduced [part of chapter two], then the experience of faith and art, as a phenomenological subject, can be explored further. Furthermore, Tillich's definition of faith and Jung's exploration of the self, will act as the first of many building blocks to form a methodology on faith as an artistic praxis.

1.2. *The beginning of faith: a consequence of belief*

When Tillich proposes a refined explanation of faith, at first glance, the term *ultimate concern* seems overly simplistic and ambiguous to be a concluded term (1957: 1). One may surmise 'belief' to be a better interpretation when defining faith, but it is a word with a definition of its

⁸ Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), "Founded the analytical school of psychology and developed a radical new theory of the unconscious." (Jung 1958).

own, with multiple contexts in which it could be redefined. Although the words ‘faith’ and ‘belief’ have similar meanings, their distinction is clarified by their context. In ‘The Oxford Quick Reference Dictionary & Thesaurus’, ‘belief’ is the first word that appears in the list of synonyms that may be used as alternates to ‘faith’ (1998). The definition of ‘belief’ is firstly recognised as a noun to its verb; ‘believe’, and secondly defined as trust and confidence. However, the headword ‘believe’ is firstly defined as “accept as true or as speaking truth” and secondly to “think” or “suppose”. But the definition does not end there, the term “believe in” acts as a binary to the primary definitions. It is defined as (1); “have faith in the existence of” and (2); “feel sure of the worth of.” (Oxford quick reference dictionary & thesaurus 1998. Sv. ‘*belief*’). If we condense the systematised definition, we can confirm that ‘believe’ is a conscious act of choice to acknowledge something as true. ‘Belief’ is the end result of ‘believe’ (or believing). ‘Belief’ acts as a final state of mind for the believer, by choosing to assimilate their belief as part of their life.

But Oxford’s definition of ‘faith’ is foremostly defined as “complete trust”, secondly “religious belief” and thirdly “loyalty” (Oxford quick reference dictionary & thesaurus 1998. Sv. ‘*faith*’). Though the headword ‘faith’ is noted as a noun, its definitions are affiliated with the choice to act upon belief, making faith a reaction to belief. This suggests that belief could not be used as a term to refine the word faith, but it is rather a chain reaction of cause and effect. For faith to exist, there needs to be a cause for its existence. In this instance, belief would be its cause. Whether the belief stems from a religion, a philosophy or political agenda; they are all primary examples of belief systems that could generate an act of faith. But in order for belief to evolve into faith, the individual must come to a conclusion that the cause of their belief is worth living for. At this conclusion, the cause of belief becomes a source of inspiration and purpose for the individual.

Tillich ascribes this moment as *ultimate concern*. Although the word ‘concern’ is a basic word that personifies personal interest in daily living, it is only once the word ‘ultimate’ is introduced, that the word surpass basic interest (Oxford quick reference dictionary & thesaurus 1998. Sv. ‘*concern*’). If something is ultimate, it has reached the highest form of its original state (Oxford quick reference dictionary & thesaurus 1998. Sv. ‘*ultimate*’). This is what Tillich is implying when he infers faith as an *ultimate concern*. He is suggesting that faith is the highest form of an individual’s personal concern (Tillich 1957: 1). If this is the case, then faith becomes a life

defining discovery. Tillich ascribes this moment as, “*He who enters the sphere of faith enters the sanctuary of life.*” (1957: 14).

When something or someone is revered as the highest concern above all other daily or life defining concerns, it reaches a state of divinity in the individual’s life. Tillich equates this to holiness, he states; “*What concerns one ultimately becomes holy. The awareness of the holy is awareness of the presence of the divine, namely of the content of our ultimate concern.*” (1957: 14). In essence, the discovery of faith is a very personal and defining experience for the individual. Firstly ‘personal’; because the content of their belief is their ultimate concern, and secondly ‘defining’; because the individual has found a purpose for living that enlightens their personality or individuality.

1.3. How Faith Develops: the person behind the faith

However, faith cannot function on *ultimate concern* alone. It may be the basis for faith, but it is not the vital component to maintain faith. What nurtures faith into an act, comes from the individual’s personal inclination towards their *ultimate concern*. How they perceive the source of their belief and translate its material into their daily life has a lot to do with personal interpretation. The individual’s history, habits and preferences play an essential part in faith development.

A primary example of this is Tillich’s notion of the *total personality*. What he describes as the *total personality* is what makes up the entire personality of the individual. Although there are many aspects of the individual’s personality to consider, for example; who they are according to gender, work title, parenthood or their heritage, these are factors that are mainly influenced by the individual’s consciousness (Tillich 1957: 5-6). But what Tillich describes as a *total personality*, is principally the interactions between the conscious and unconscious dynamics of the individual’s identity:

“Faith as an act of the total personality is not imaginable without the participation of the unconscious elements in the personality structure. They are always present and decide largely about the content of faith. But, on the other hand, faith is a conscious act and the unconscious elements participate in the creation of faith only if they are taken into the personal center which

transcends each of them. If this does not happen, if unconscious forces determine the mental status without a centered act, faith does not occur, and compulsions take its place. For faith is a matter of freedom. Freedom is nothing more than the possibilities of centered personality acts.” (Tillich 1957: 5-6).

The unconscious plays an important role when creating personal faith. Tillich suggests that faith is an element of the unconscious meditations of the individual’s *ultimate concern*. But an act of faith is the individual’s conscious reaction to unconscious meditations (Tillich 1957: 5-6). To better understand this dynamic, Carl Gustav Jung expounds on the subject of the individual’s journey to *self-knowledge*. He equates *self-knowledge* with spiritual enlightenment of the human mind, which transpires as a personal life experience. Like Tillich, he attributes the individual’s personality to a consciousness and unconsciousness synergism. While less enthused by Tillich, Jung viewed the dynamics of consciousness as a phenomenal aspect of the human psyche. Jung’s foremost stance on the idea of the individual is psychological. But when tapping into the psyche of individualism, he suggests parapsychology as an avenue to consider (Jung 1958: 33-34).

Jung equates the unconscious attribute of the individual as a phenomenon of the human psyche. Although there is the opinion that consciousness is an “epiphenomenon of a biochemical process in the brain”, Jung was not satisfied with this conclusion (Jung 1958: 34). He believed that consciousness is a by-product of unconsciousness. And while it is easier to identify the depths and the reaches of consciousness, it is a far more reaching and complex identification process for the unconscious. Jung gathered that the human psyche was more intricate than a chemical reaction of the brain, and in order to assert this claim, it needed to be examined as a phenomenological subject (1958: 34). He believed that parapsychology and the unconscious were one in the same and a key element in understanding the consciousness of the individual (Jung 1958: 33-35). In an abstract, he unpacks the psychological structures of the individual, while explaining the role of the psychic process:

“The structure and physiology of the brain furnish no explanation of the psychic process. The psychic has a peculiar nature which cannot be reduced to anything else. Like physiology, it represents a relatively self-contained field of experience to which we must attribute a quite special importance because it holds within itself one of the two indispensable conditions for existence as such, namely, the phenomenon of consciousness. Without consciousness there would, practically speaking, be no world, for the world exists as such only in so far as it is consciously reflected and

consciously expressed by a psyche. Consciousness is a precondition of being. Thus the psyche is endowed with the dignity of a cosmic principle, which philosophically and in fact gives it a position coequal with the principle of physical being. The carrier of this consciousness is the individual, who does not produce the psyche on his own volition but is, on the contrary, preformed by it and nourished by the gradual awakening of consciousness during childhood. If the psyche must be granted an overriding empirical importance, so also must the individual, who is the only immediate manifestation of the psyche.” (Jung 1958: 33).

When Jung speaks about the “psyche”, he is referring to the unconscious. It becomes clear by his parapsychological terminology that his position on the unconscious aspect of the individual is beyond the physical plains of its consciousness. In his hypothesis, he does not make claims as to where the unconscious element comes from but assigns it to a phenomenological experience of the individual’s make-up. In addition, the phenomenal experience of the unconscious is what creates or “awakens” consciousness. The consciousness is what makes reality tangible to the entire psyche. It is through this experience that the individual is forged.

When Tillich explains the *total personality’s* part in the faith grooming process, he infers that the unconsciousness of the individual is the starting point of faith development (1957:5-7). But where Jung appropriates the unconscious with the parapsychological, we deduce that he is referring to the spiritual side of the individual. If this is the case, then the unconscious influence on faith development could be the meditations of the human soul. It is only through consciousness that these meditations can be premeditated into choices and actions. Therefore, when an *ultimate concern* or source of belief is introduced, the soul processes its spiritual or enlightened benefits (and consequences) to the entirety of the individual’s identity. Once the soul’s meditations are concluded, the consciousness of the individual begins to premeditate the effects that their meditations could have in their waking life. They would have to consider every aspect that their new-found god (or ideology) would have on their identity and daily life. This is where the act of faith comes to fruition.

1.4. Faith and the makings of our gods

So far, Tillich's analysis of the dynamics of faith have been observed from the individual's experience of their *ultimate concern*. But the dynamics of faith would not be a dynamic, if the *ultimate concerns* interaction with the individual was not observed too:

“faith is the state of being ultimately concerned. The content matters infinitely for the life of the believer, but it does not matter for the formal definition of faith. And this is the first step we have to make in order to understand the dynamics of faith.” (Tillich 1957: 4)

What is being suggested here, is that the source of belief is an entity or force of its own. It has a history, ideology and preference that forms its identity too and has nothing to do with the individual's life, (unless the individual chooses to adopt the ideology). The source of belief is not answerable to anyone or anything but itself. It does not need to be validated by a higher being or alternative ideology to gain purpose for its existence. The source of belief is an existence unto itself, but what gives it god-like status is how the individual responds to its doctrine. It must be an agent of spiritual or purposeful enlightenment to the individual. Once it bears this enlightened semblance, it becomes a force that is revered as superior; infinite, to the individual's life. Due to the individual's recognition that there is something or someone superior to their identity, they acknowledge that the source of belief has a superior knowledge to their own. As a result, the superior knowledge could only have a superior purpose to the individual, inspiring them to be a part of that purpose. This would conclude with a *total surrender* of the individual's identity to the identity of their belief, transforming the source of belief into a god (Griffin 1989: 14).

The true makings of a god stems from the depths the individual is willing to go to edify their belief. However, this is not a case of the individual justifying their belief in their god or ideology. This is not about them showcasing their faith to the world, but it is rather about them surrendering their personal world, by faith, to their god. In this case, the most effective form of surrender is an act of faith; hence Tillich's *centered act*.

1.5. Centered Act: how an act of faith works

Thus far, we have established that faith is the result of devotional belief in a superior entity or knowledge, where the personal processes of faith can only be realised by the individual's psyche. Hence, the individual enters into an inner state of personal reflections of the self and their source of belief. This phase of faith development incurs the phenomenal encounters of spiritual meaning and personal enlightenment. We can call this phase, the introspective phase of faith. But the act of faith is a whole different phase altogether. The act of faith is the moment when all processes of personal faith culminates and transitions into a conscious act. We can call this moment the extrospective phase of faith. Although the development of faith is the inner workings of the individual's meditations of their god and their own existence, the act of faith is the external materialisation of their inner reflections. What the individual believes to be true from an existential and metaphysical point, becomes part of their personal convictions. These convictions become part of their will and occur in their life choices. Their belief becomes an addition to their identity and it is via the identity that faith is personified.

“Since faith is an act of the personality as a whole, it participates in the dynamics of personal life.”

(Tillich 1957: 5).

To better demonstrate what Tillich is saying here, an example is needed to demonstrate how faith would be applied in waking life. We can look to Judaism for example. The basic premise of the Jewish faith is that, after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God of the universe (e.g. Elohim, Yahweh or Adoniah) cultivated a nation from the genealogy of Abraham and Sarah (Canaanites). Their genealogy was believed to be a genealogy of mankind reserved for Elohim alone. The genealogy leads all the way to Joseph and his brothers, who settled in Egypt, where their nuclear families had populated into a community, generations later. After years of enslavement, Elohim called upon Moses (or Moshe) to lead the generations of Abraham out of Egypt. Only once Moses had led the captives out of the land of Egypt did Elohim create a covenant between the lost generations of Abraham as His people and became their God. With the obedient help of Moses, Elohim created the Commandments (Mitzvot or Torah) that His people must follow, as part of the covenant that would seal them as the nation of God. Along with the Commandments came blessings, if the generations of Abraham were obedient, and curses if they broke His Commandments. In addition, Elohim named His nation after one of the forefathers:

i.e. Jacob (later renamed Israel). After the covenant of God was established with Israel, Elohim lead them into their *promised land*, by helping them defeat the ruling tribes that occupied it. To this day, the nation of Israel still resides, (with the exception of a few districts), within the parameters of the land that is written in the Torah (or Tanakh) as God ordained (Palmer 2004: 174-178).

Without delving into the different denominations, or subcultures, (that developed later for political and immigration reasons), what I have detailed here is a simple breakdown of the origin of Judaism. Its heritage stems from a genealogy that is believed to be sacred to God. Due to Jewish communities' belief in the Tanakh as their history, its traditions have been held from generation to generation. However, how the traditions are lived out by all the different Jewish communities depends on the individuals that make up the communities. Although they have the traditions of their Judaic heritage to uphold, the individual's personality has a lot to do with how these traditions are upheld in their independent lives.

The idea here, is not to observe the religiousness of Judaic practice, but how the Jewish individual's faith in their heritage influences their personal life. For instance, if we construct a collective idea of a rabbi, he is the epitome of Judaic faith. Our first thoughts of him would be to imagine him in the environment that best suites the identity of a rabbi; the synagogue. But when he goes home to his family, he becomes firstly a husband and a father, and secondly a rabbi. When he tends to his side business as a bakery owner, he is firstly a manager and boss. His identity changes according to different conscious roles that make up his entire personality. But what keeps these identities under the canopy of his person is how his faith interweaves through his different roles. To be a husband of Judaic faith means he would have to keep the husbandly duties of Torah. To be a manager of faith, he would have to uphold the Mitzvot's (Commandments) that pertain to business and employment practice (Palmer 2004: 174-178).

At the crux of this example, the dominating aspect of the rabbi's identity, in all aspects of his life, is his faith. Although the roles of his personality change, his faith remains consistent throughout the "*dynamics of [his] personal life*" (Tillich 1957: 5). But how he personifies his faith through these roles, exemplifies the depths of his belief. The only reason why the rabbi would faithfully abide by the Torah is because he truly believes that he is a part of the genealogy of Abraham and that his ancestors agreed to an unbroken covenant with God. And so, because of his belief, he

faithfully embodies its ideology, which is personified, not only in the synagogue, but in all aspects of his life. Hence, he practices what he believes.

Tillich's definition of a *centered act* perfectly summarises my vivid illustration of how faith could be experienced extrospectively.

“Faith as ultimate concern is an act of the total personality. It happens in the center of the personal life and includes all its elements. Faith is the most centered act of the human mind. It is not a movement of a special section or a special function of man's total being. They all are united in the act of faith. But faith is not the sum total of their impact. It transcends every special impact as well as the totality of them and it has itself a decisive impact on each of them.” (1957: 4).

What is deduced from this summary is that an extrospective experience of faith is a metamorphosis of the introspective phase of faith. What the individual believes in, becomes their life defining practice and that practice cannot be defined without faith.

1.6. Argument against faith as a Modernist construct

After reviewing my method of reasoning faith as a praxis and assigning its construct as empirical, I do acknowledge that it does have the potential to be identified as a Modernist study. Griffin affirms my assumption in his study of Tillich's analysis of faith as *antispiritualism*, which originates as a Modernist concept (1989: 116). He states:

“Everyone, however, embodies a spirituality in a broad sense of the term, because in this sense it means a person's fundamental convictions, values, attitudes, and habits, especially with regard to what he or she considers most important. To use Paul Tillich's term, one's spirituality embodies one's *ultimate concern*, which means what one takes to be holy, or of ultimate worth. A *materialistic spirituality* is therefore possible. Combining then the strict and broad meanings of the term, we can speak of an antispiritual spirituality, which is a spirituality in the broad sense that discourages the development of spirituality in the strict sense.” (Griffins 1989: 117).

Griffin's antispiritual assessment is correct, because Tillich's analytical approach does convey antispiritual objectives. Tillich analyses the motions of faith as a reaction of an individual's consciousness to their environment and the content of their faith. Therefore, Tillich's hypothesis

is a materialistic view of faith, not spiritual. And because antispiritualism consists of materialistic spirituality, we can concede that the dynamics of Tillich's faith is a Modernist view. However, where I digress that my concept of faith as a praxis is incomprehensible as a contemporary attitude in visual art, on the basis of its Modernist conception, is when the personal proclivity of the individual is taken into account. Because the venture of faith is relative to the individual's experiences and the immediate environment of that individual plays an important part in the experience of their faith, we would need to observe the context of their faith within the individual's era. Furthermore, if the individual is practicing their faith in the 21st century, we would have to observe their faith in line with the 21st century. This also means that the concept and experience of faith is not fixed and assigned to a movement or a particular era, but it is rather constantly evolving. This makes Tillich's analysis of faith as an empirical subject a relevant one, and one to consider as a method in a contemporary environment. Although we have summarised the practicalities of faith and observed how faith could be implemented in daily life, we have yet to observe it as an artistic praxis. To do this, however, the artistic attribute of an individual would need to be singled out from their *total personality*. That way, faith as an act, in an artistic environment would be easier to analyse as a praxis. This will be covered in chapter two. Once chapter two has been revised, we can begin to examine how this concept of faith can be implemented in a contemporary artistic environment, and discern whether my opinion on the subject is credible.

Chapter Two:

A study of faith as an artistic praxis and its development

2.1. Literature Review of chapter two

What has been reviewed and discussed in chapter one is a detailed example of the method in which faith functions. In this chapter, faith's method will be exercised as an observational tool for the visual analysis of artistic praxis. However, the objective approach that was used when defining faith in the first chapter will not be applied here. Where I chose to define faith without an ideology as its origin will not be the case for this chapter either. Instead, this chapter is where we examine how faith interacts with art on the premise of one ideology. Here we can observe how faith works in a subject environment. To gain a better context of faith as a praxis, its artistic ideology needs to be thoroughly reviewed first. This will entail its environment, relevance to its period and how the aesthetic evolves according to the development of the artist's ideological practice and belief. However, if faith as a praxis is observed in more than one ideology, this would cause an influx of historical and cultural information on several different topics, which would lose sight of the subject at hand. By observing one ideology in relation to art, a better understanding of what faith is, and is not, can be determined.

A brief review and examination of the history of Christianity and its affiliation with art will be our frame of reference. After reviewing the origin and development of Christian inspired art, within the context of faith, an example of personalised Christian faith as an artistic praxis will be analysed. By drawing attention to the development of visual theology and the personal faith personified in these artworks, we can begin to develop an eye and understanding of the process of faith as an artistic praxis. In addition, my own practice is foremostly influenced by Christian faith, making this chapter an ideal introduction to the perspective in which I generate artwork.

The first sub-section, titled; '*Religion before faith: the transition from religious art to faith motivated artwork*', is a brief historical look at the early development of Christian inspired art. This section will focus on the transition of religious church artwork to artwork that questions religious knowledge as the only avenue for self-knowledge. The transition of the Byzantine era to the Renaissance period will be observed, specifically the portrayal of religious faith in Byzantine

church motifs to humanism portrayed and questioned in Biblically inspired artwork of the Renaissance. A brief look at the pre-Byzantine era's Bible-inspired catacombs will act as an introduction to the development of the Byzantine church art. When analysing the development of church art, the history of the use of art and church architecture will be observed in relation to the development of the Christian religion. This will outline how the Byzantine church artworks and aesthetics played an important role in constructing the religiosity of Christian faith, making the artwork religious art. Sources used to delineate a short history in religious church art and its development during the Byzantine era, range from Robin Margaret Jensen's⁹, '*Understanding Early Christian Art*' (2000), to William. A. Dyrness¹⁰, '*Visual Faith: Art, Theology and worship in dialogue*' (2001). '*The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*' (1930), by Bernard Berenson¹¹ will be my source of reference when discussing Michelangelo's and Raphael's individual murals exhibited in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican.

The second sub-section title, '*The beginning of faith exploration in art: Rembrandt*', is an in-depth and personal look at Rembrandt's personal affiliation with Christianity and how his views of Christianity are reflected in his work. Certain artworks will be analysed according to his development as an artist in relation to his struggle with Christian faith. J. I. Durham's, '*The Biblical Rembrandt: Human painter in a landscape of faith*' (2004) will assist in interpreting Rembrandt's visual theology. H. W. van Loon's¹² biography, '*The life and times of Rembrandt*' (1930), will help gauge Rembrandt's character, and discern his motivations behind his work. Online sources from '*Rembrandt data base*' search engines will be used to verify dates, titles and detailed information about referenced artworks. Texts and verses from the Bible will also be used to clarify theological meaning in each artwork.

For 2.4. '*Faith as an artistic praxis: Makoto Fujimura; a contemporary artist that happens to be Christian*', will be an overview of Makoto Fujimura's '*The Four Holy Gospels*' (2011). This section will focus on how his bicultural identity and education plays an essential part in how he

⁹ Robin Margaret Jensen (1952); known as the Patrick O'Brien Professor of Theology Biblical studies/Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity History of Christianity Liturgical Studies." (Robin M. Jensen).

¹⁰ William. A. Dyrness (1943), is an American theologian, Dean Emeritus and Senior Professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary (William. A. Dyrness).

¹¹ Russian born Bernard Berenson (1865-1959); was known as an art historian, American art critic and specialised in Italian Renaissance art (Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2018. Sv. *Bernard Berenson*.).

¹² Hendrik Willem van Loon (1882-1944), "was a Dutch-American historian, journalist and award-winning children's book author" (Hendrik Willem van Loon).

identifies with his faith. His abstract impressionist aesthetic and traditional Japanese art of Nihonga, translates his faith from a place of experience, personal history and spirituality. Here we get to analyse the unique voice Fujimura has developed visually and how it translates his Christian faith. Most of the literature used to review Fujimura's work comes from his self-titled website *Makotofujimura.com*. On his site he has innumerable journal blogs and short documentaries of his work and his career. This will be my source of reference when discussing his work *'The Four Holy Gospels'* (2011) and the existential journey that he experienced during production. Scriptures from the Bible will be added to the examination of his work, to elaborate on the context of his Christian faith in his artistic setting.

2.2. Religion before faith: the transition from religious art to faith motivated artwork.

At this point, what needs to be clarified is that religious art and faith as an artistic praxis are two very different things. And there is no better period to demonstrate this differentiation than the Renaissance. The impact of the Renaissance period played an essential part in free thinking as an artist and individual. The revelation of Humanism catapulted the Europe into a stratosphere of science and philosophy, inspiring people and groups to reason for themselves. Independent thinking was encouraged, which led to question the influential hierarchy of the church and their political relevance. Religion was no longer humanity's primary reason for existence, but self-knowledge was fast becoming the antidote for questions the church could not answer. The Renaissance period was an era that revolutionised free thinking and would forever change the course of human identity. It was an era of self-evaluation and its art was proof of that. Steering away from the Byzantine style and influencers, the artists of the Renaissance began to explore less holy terrain. But to understand what 'holy terrain' they had strayed from, we would need to examine its preceding era (Britannica 2017. Sv. *'Renaissance art'*).

From the moment Constantine officiated Christianity as a religion, up until the Late Byzantine era, art was mainly reserved for the church. The Byzantine Age was the era that honed and constructed the Christian religion. Pre-Constantine, there was no official church per se, and Christianity was not yet fully recognised as a practicing religion. Religious artwork during this time was minimal and basic, and mainly forged as funerary motifs in the catacombs of Rome. Stories from the Bible were created as illustrative liturgies on the interior of the sepulchres (fig.4.).

Because paganism was widespread and Greco-Roman aesthetics and symbolism was prevalent in early 3rd century art, its style naturally featured in these catacombs (Jensen 2000: 10-13).

It was only once Christianity was legitimized that its religion began to develop its own style and symbolism. However, because the Christian religion was under social and political development, its art became a fundamental tool in constructing its image. Reading was not easily accessible to all, and therefore the artworks commissioned by the Church [for the Church] became instrumental in propagating Catholicism and its dogmas. It is without saying that Catholicism would never be recognised as Catholicism without its art. Its flatness and sanctimonious aesthetic was a drastic turn from the naturalistic Greco-Roman gods. The premise of Catholic art was to convey holiness and the spiritually divine. The earliest sign of this was during the Early Byzantine. The heavenly realms and their deceased saints populated the walls of the early churches. At times, the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ was seen with these saints, often symbolising the saints new eternal home (fig.5.). Gold was used to convey the Heavens or spiritual realms; signifying the phenomenon of God's eternal kingdom. This was used as a point of reference, to focus on the 'unseen things'; the mysteries of God. It was a constant reminder, [to the congregation] that the ultimate goal was to obtain eternal bliss in Heaven, as the late saints did. And to achieve this, they needed to emulate the legacy of the saints. The more the Church defined its image according to its artistic development, the further it drifted from Hellenistic influence and Greco-Roman association. The Roman Empire had found its identity in Catholicism and that identity further nurtured its political and social agendas (Hurst 2014).

By the Middle Byzantine period, the Church's wealth and political authority had grown exponentially. As their authority flourished, so did their art. The Church's use of art as a form of doctrine, had developed into a symbol of worship. Instead of praying to and glorifying the unseen God, people began to venerate the images of Christ, his disciples and predecessors (Dzalto 2015). However, not all bishops and church officials advocated this practice, which caused a divide in the Church and political sector. Many viewed it as a form of idolatry on the basis of Exodus 20: 3-5:

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord

thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me..." (Exodus 20: 3-5).

This was one of many reasons that motioned Emperor Leo III to take civil action against the iconic movement of image worship, which brought about the Iconoclastic Controversy. Some reasoned his motives were political. There are theories that Leo III sought to eradicate Christian imagery so that the Jewish and Muslim population could be integrated. But as far as records show, Biblical idolatry was the main issue; encouraging paganism in the Church and misleading devote Christians away from the Gospel. For more than a hundred years the Middle Byzantine era saw the destruction of innumerable paintings and sculptures, shy of a few surviving relics (Dzalto 2015).

By the end of the struggle, the Iconophiles (those that were pro-icons) won the debate, reasoning that the depictions of Christ represented the incarnation of God. Although He was once *unseen*, His human form was proof of His existence, making the iconic images of Christ a form of the acknowledgement of God incarnate (Dzalto 2015).

Byzantine art acted as a medium [or window] to the holy realm for Christians and visitors alike. The whole design of the Icons was composed for devout Christians to meditate on spiritual territory. The golden backdrops elevated the icons, creating an illusion of suspension. Vibrant use of colour and brazen use of line eased the eye to remain centred on the image (fig. 6). The patterned facial features remain identifiable as human, yet not entirely human, which could be interpreted as Christ's humanity as deific. However, the spiralled features were primarily used as a form of visual manipulation, causing a tranquil effect on the eye. This coaxed the viewer to rest their sights on the enlarged, penetrating eyes of the Icon, inducing a point of connection and meditation. Still, the Church's use of imagery does not end there, but culminates when the structure and composition of the building is panoramically viewed with the artwork.

Moving on from the Early Byzantine basilica architecture, the Church opted for a smaller radial plan that indorsed an intimate experience with the divine (fig. 7). Instead of normalising the large longitudinal structure of the *Hagia Sofia* (532-37), the *cross-in-square* plan became a fixtured method in Church architecture (fig. 8). The square consisted of four equal vaulted arms, mostly barrel like in shape [barrel vaults] (fig. 9) that intersected each other, forming a cross-structured ceiling. Centralised in this cross-structure were domes decorated with Iconic paintings of the "All-Ruling-Father" [Pantocrator] (fig.10). The walls and the ceilings were arrayed with

decorations and mosaics of cherubim's, saints of the Papacy and iconographic scenes of the Virgin and Child. The visual scheme of the ceiling represented the levels of the universe, reaching to the spherical courts of the Most High God (fig. 7). Meanwhile, the ground rendered the earthly plains of humanity; where the seated look up from the pulpit, while interceding to the celestial cosmos (Hurst 2014).

The whole experience of the Byzantine churches predominantly relied on the aesthetics of their artwork and architecture to create a holy sanctuary for the people. It advocated their theology and nurtured the people's religious perceptions of God to rely on the Church to foster their salvation. Their salvation was sensationalised and controlled by the Church and personal faith was not yet a popular practice. Faith, by the Early Church's standards, was an indoctrinated experience, which labelled faith as a religious devotion. Biblical literature was not easily accessible to the masses however, and so they were completely reliant on the Church's doctrine to maintain their Christian identity (Britannica 2018. Sv. 'Byzantine art'). One could say that the Church had replaced the role of Jesus Christ by creating a sanctuary that, presumably, embodied Him. In the New Testament it is more than once stipulated that Jesus is the only point of access to God (John 14: 6). But what the Early Church did, with their artwork and architecture, was create their own doorway to the *All-Ruling-Father*. The whole platform in which the Church was created, was to emphasise a focal point of worship. In this case the focal point was the building and its inhabitants, not necessarily the risen Christ and the invisible Father. Because the Church had imagined God, Christ and the firmaments for the people, it would be a challenging task for a biblically unlearned congregation to perceive God beyond the *cross-in-square* ceiling. It is evident that Byzantine artwork and architecture was instrumental in constructing the Christian religion, but not necessarily faith. What the Early Church's did was mobilise a religious construct of faith through their artwork, making Christian inspired art, religious art. The art was manufactured for religious affirmation, not Christian faith (Dyrness 2001: 26-27).

But the Renaissance period was the perfect conditions to deflect contrived religion and explore the prospects of faith. I believe the first signs of this venture started when Humanism intersected Biblical narratives in art. By the time of High Renaissance, a highly developed example is Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel* (1508-1512) (fig. 11). Although the artwork is not a major signifier of faith, its perspective alludes to a better understanding of God's connection to humanity.

Deviating from the patterned features and the stark flatness of the Byzantine Icons, Michelangelo humanised the likeness of God to human creation. The iconic image of God's interaction with Adam, mirrors Genesis 1: 27, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*". Michelangelo took this verse literally in his interpretation. Instead of deifying the image of God, he made God relatable. God's complexion and muscle tone is the same as Adam's. Excluding the entourage of cherubim, His grey hair and white beard is the only physical trait that signifies a hierarchy to Adam's physique. Symbolically, grey hair on male icons represented wisdom and patriarchy. This symbolises God as a father figure rather than an ethereal being. Michelangelo bridged the relational gap by standardising the semblance of God as human. Through the de-deification of God's image, Michelangelo deified the image of humanity. Unlike, the unreachable iconic God of the high rising domes of the Byzantine cathedrals, Michelangelo made God accessible to humanity at the reach of a fingertip (Berenson 1930: 97-98).

During the time Michelangelo was working on his masterpiece in the Vatican, Raphael was working on his fresco, the *School of Athens* (1508-11) (fig. 12). However, Raphael's concept was no Biblical illustration, but rather a celebration of freedom of thought. Yet the composition and atmosphere of the work vaguely resembles the energy of Leonardo Da Vinci's (1452-1519) *Last Supper* (1490s) (Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci. n.d.). However, instead of a serene Christ in the midst of his disciples, Raphael portrays the great philosophical and scientific minds of history. In the center, we see Aristotle on the right and Plato on the left. The scenario depicted here, is of the two philosophers calmly disputing their individual philosophies. Their gestures act as indicators to their beliefs. Plato's hand gesture to the sky, signifies his stance that the ethereal realm is the true reality and the physical is but a shadow of it. He believed that this ethereal world is the ultimate reality and the foundation of truth, beauty, justice and wisdom. Aristotle gestured his hand to the lower level, conveying his belief that the only reality is the one that is tangible to physical sight, touch and earthly experience. On the lower left, Pythagoras can be seen writing, presumably working out cosmic harmony according to mathematical laws. On the lower right we see Ptolemy with his back to us, holding earth, while Zoroaster holds up a celestial sphere (Garrigues 1979: 411-415).

Raphael had created a hypothetical atmosphere where history's greatest minds meet under the same roof. Although the building itself is a representation of the school of Athens, the architecture resembles the Church plans of the Byzantine era. The high rising ceiling echoes the barrel vaults of the Mid-Byzantine churches. However, in Raphael's fresco, the sections where golden domes of decorated Icons would normally feature, there is nothing but open skies (fig. 12).

With minimal colourful motifs and sculptures of Greek gods that blend into the ivory toned walls, there is very little to distract the viewer from the animated scholars. In this church of knowledge, the theorists and thinkers are the main attraction, not the gods or religion. The cathedral ceiling with gaping holes where the Madonna or Christ would normally occupy, reveals the expanse of the firmaments. Here, in an ambience of knowledge, the only limit to human exploration is the sky. And in the midst of all the scholarly activity we see Raphael himself, between Ptolemy and Zoroaster, gazing back at us (fig 13).

The presence of Raphael is the single most philosophical moment throughout the whole painting. What we can deduce from the elements of humanism and religion intermingled in this artwork, is that there is slight contention between the two paradigms. Raphael's gaze back at the viewer raises an introspective question; who do we turn to for self-knowledge, ourselves or religion?

What can be taken away from observing the *Sistine Chapel* and *School of Athens*, is the questioning of human identity and human validity. Faith cannot be explored unless the individual has identified the core of who they are. It is not enough for them to be told who they are, they need to discover this for themselves (Jung 1958: 31). I believe this is primarily what artists like Michelangelo and Raphael were pursuing in their artwork. It is only once the individual understands who they are as an individual, that they can begin to explore why they hold onto certain beliefs.

2.3. The beginning of faith exploration in art: Rembrandt

To explore the idea further, that faith can be an important part of an artist's creative process, an artist that naturally exhibits the process of personal faith would need to be examined. Rembrandt is an exceptional example, and not for the obvious reasons. Although Rembrandt is famous for his paintings and etchings depicting Biblical events, it is his personal affiliation with the Bible that

makes his artwork impactful. For instance, his painting titled, *An Old Woman Reading*¹³(fig.14) (1631), is a rendition of Anna the prophetess of the New Testament. The scenario leading up to Luke 2: 36-38 recounts Joseph and Mary bringing the infant Jesus to Jerusalem to present him before God and to perform the customary sacrifices in the temple. As they go about their tradition, they encounter two prophets, first Simeon and then Anna, who individually, imparts a prophetic word about the new-born. The chronicle of Anna reads:

“There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Luke 2: 36-38).

The element that makes this artwork personal is that the woman used to model Anna is Rembrandt’s mother. A common assumption, amongst art historians, is that Rembrandt had great admiration for his mother, and this was showcased through his portrayal of her (Durham 2004: 54). Although multiple women have been named and detailed in the New Testament, Anna is the only prophetess mentioned, which implies that women prophets were a rarity for its time. One could estimate that for a Christian woman to be compared to Anna was a compliment of the highest degree. Anna was a rare instance in an era where woman were mainly uneducated and viewed as subordinates (Ackerman 2016). For Rembrandt to model his mother as Anna (or Anna as his mother) does not only hint at how he viewed her, but how she influenced the development of his faith. In the painting, Rembrandt’s signature use of chiaroscuro is instrumental in conveying how he viewed his mother’s faith (Durham 2004: 55). The telling points of the painting are revealed by what Rembrandt allowed the light to illuminate. Her grey background disappears into the blackened shadows, highlighting her adornment. The direction of the light graces her back, hiding her face in its shadow. It’s as if the light’s objective was to reach the pages she caresses, and only that. What we can gather from Rembrandt’s composition is that, like Anna, his mother’s whole identity was wrapped in her religion. The fact that her face is not an important feature

¹³ I would like to make a note here, that although Rembrandt has done multiple portraits of his mother under the same title, some of these portraits were done by his understudies. But, although researched, it is still not completely clear which works are Rembrandt’s and which ones are his students’. However, the portrait that I discuss in this section has been confirmed, more than denied, as Rembrandt’s painting (Durham 2004: 55).

implies that her individuality was completely overshadowed by her belief in God. We can assume that this impression of Rembrandt's mother had a profound impact on him, because he created multiple portraits of the same title, at different angles. Rembrandt continued to use her likeness in many more Biblical depictions.

The '*Stoning of Stephen*' (1625) (fig.15) was one of Rembrandt's earliest works. In fact, many art historians believed it to be his first solo artwork. Rembrandt was 19 years old at the time and had just about finished his four-year apprenticeship in Amsterdam. His signature style was not yet fully developed and showed signs of influence from his teacher, Pieter Lastman (1583-1633). However, what distinguished his work from his mentors was his sensitivity to human experience. In other words, his motive, as an artist, was to be honest about the human condition. He remained true to his artistic convictions, even when creating Biblical artwork. Instead of ascribing a holy and sanctified aesthetic to his work, he interpreted the verses as a human experience (Durham 2004: 22-23).

Stephen's story goes, that it was his first and last testimony of Jesus Christ that ended in him being stoned to death. The Bible verse that Rembrandt depicted reads:

“Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7: 54-59).

Rembrandt's painting of the verse is as detailed as its narration. It is a painting of a man, a martyr, being executed on the pretence of blasphemy. There are no angels or cherubim in the painting, no clerical clichés, spheres of gold halos or classical traditions implemented. Rembrandt does not go out of his way to imagine what Stephen must have seen for us. He created what he saw in the verses. To be able to stone another human to death, a sense of hatred must have been felt, so Rembrandt rendered human hatred. During the stoning, Stephen was mainly occupied with his visions of Heaven, which justifies his disconnected reaction to the scenario. The whole scene

focuses on the human reactions. There is no sign of God or ecclesiastical symbolism, just the people and raw emotions (fig. 15).

The point at which the work takes a personal turn is when Rembrandt is identified in the masses. Under the arm of the man raising a rock to strike Stephen, we see a profiled Rembrandt looking back at us. The fact that he identified himself with the crowd and not Stephen, hints at a confession. Alternatively, by gazing back at the viewer, he could be provoking conviction on our part (fig.16). Although this is dated as his earliest work, this conceptual method was often used in Rembrandt's Biblical pieces, which eventually developed his personal theology (Griffis 1906: 104).

Rembrandt's Biblical works were never embraced by the Catholic or Dutch Reformed Church. His Biblical works were visions of the people, for the people (Griffis 1906: 100). His artworks were not interpretations of Church dogmas, but theologically conceived of his own understanding. To attempt Biblical interpretation in such a personal way, could only come from crossing the paradigms of religion and humanism. At such a young age, Rembrandt was already showing signs of spiritual mindedness, which we can deduce came from his upbringing [predominantly from his mother] and his education (Durham 2004: 55). But this was only the beginning of many more works that would showcase a stronger inclination towards personal faith.

Eight years later, Rembrandt produced *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee* (1633) (fig. 17). The painting illustrates the verse Matthew 8:23-25;

“Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” (Matthew 8: 23-25).

Again, Rembrandt does not hesitate to render emotionally fraught scripture. He approaches the verse with relatable sentiment and creates a visual dialogue of his perspective. When compared to his interpretation of the ‘*Stoning of Stephen*’ (1625), his technique had developed immensely, and his use of chiaroscuro had reached maturation. His grasp on the use of light and darkness had become his artistic vernacular. His strategic positioning of light translates his view of the text as spiritually introspective. In full sweeping view, the painting is spectacular. His use of colour and variation of tone adds to the tense atmosphere. At the raised section of the boat, men rally to

restrain its sails. One man in blazing yellow, holds on as the waves crash aboard. On the lower regions, a seasick stricken man, hurls overboard. A seasoned sailor leans his strength into the rudder as he steers against the tide, while the disciples wake Jesus in panic (fig. 17).

What is interesting about Rembrandt's choice of composition, is where he chooses the light to hit. With Jesus on the scene, one would assume Rembrandt would choose to shroud him in singular light. But instead, the waves get the glory. In particular, the waves crashing against the boat is the most highlighted and visually stimulating section of the painting. He embodies the crash with a luminous white, the sort of signifying white that we find Christ loosely robed in, in *'The Incredulity of St Thomas'* (1634) (fig. 18) and removed from the cross in *'The Descent from the Cross'* (1633) (fig. 19). Symbolically, white represents purity, cleansing, innocence, holiness and righteousness¹⁴. These are great indicators in both paintings. In *'The Incredulity of St Thomas'* (1634), the white robe is an emblem for Christ's holy resurrection and purified estate. While *'The Descent from the Cross'* (1633), embodies Jesus's innocence and submission to death. In both paintings Christ and the white linen are clothed in light, distinguishing his holiness. But in the heart of a storm, in an almost capsized boat, the waves are gloriously magnified. The hosts of the ship's reactions are induced by the storm and the storm has their full attention. When the disciples anxiously wake Jesus from his sleep, they cry to him, *"Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"* (Matthew 8:25). Jesus response to them may be the reason why Rembrandt places emphasis on the storm and not on Christ. Jesus says: *"And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."* (Matthew 8:26).

Before the storm of Galilee, the disciples had already witnessed Jesus perform many miracles, so their natural inclination was to turn to him for help. But what is interesting about Jesus' response, was his direct questioning of their lack of faith. It is as if he expected them to perform the miracle and let him continue his nap. Up until this point, the disciples had followed Jesus and heard him teach, watched him cast out demons, see him heal the sick, all while doing the impossible. During their fellowship, Jesus taught his disciples that all that he had done, they could do too¹⁵. But they

¹⁴ Bible verses on the significance and symbolism of 'white': Daniel 7:9, Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:3, Luke 9:29, Revelation 1:12-14, 6:11, 19:8, 20:11, Daniel 11:35, 12:10, Psalm 51:7, Isaiah 1:18, Revelation 1:14, 2 Chronicles 5:12, Mark 16:5, John 20:12 and Acts 1:10.

¹⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12).

were fearful and had magnified the storm instead of Christ, forgetting all that he had taught them. What Rembrandt conveyed in his painting was the absence of faith. However, he does not end his illustrative sermon there, but in the midst of the chaos, in the lower central area of the boat, we see Rembrandt holding onto his hat while looking straight at us (fig. 17).

There are three logical explanations as to why he would insert himself into the scene. [1]. He had been through his own life storms and had lacked faith when he needed it most. Perhaps, through his own hardships, he had learnt to have faith in the teachings of Christ, or by observing Christ's teachings he had discovered that faith is meant to be practiced and not just observed. [2]. He is convicting the viewer of their lack of faith and encouraging his audience to reflect on how they personify their faith. [3]. By rejecting Church symbolism and aesthetics, he is rejecting the Church's religiosity of faith and choosing to humanise faith, making it a personal venture. Whatever Rembrandt's objective may have been, what we can gather is that he must have had a profound understanding of the New Testament to negotiate any one of these scenarios into his work.

With the exception of having his children christened at the Dutch Reformed church, when researching whether Rembrandt was part of a religious community, there was no evidence that suggested he ever was. Although his mother was a devout Catholic and his father a supporter of the Protestant Reformation, he did not inherit their religious proclivity. However, he did relate deeply to the books of the Bible and examined their contents in his artwork. By modelling family, loved ones, his immediate community and himself in his work, he reflects on the scripture according to his life experiences and not religious dogmas (Griffis 1906: 103-105). What I have gathered by observing Rembrandt's Biblical artwork, was a man who was grappling with his own faith. However, it was not his belief that he struggled with, [because his interpretation of scripture is profoundly introspective], but it was his faith he struggled to personify.

In Hendrick Willem van Loon's historical biography of Rembrandt's life, chapter 80 narrates the last moments of Rembrandt's life (1930). What van Loon depicts is an aged and ailed Rembrandt. An old man rummaging through his paints and etching tools, prepping his studio for new work. But the new work never came. His deteriorated eye sight could no longer handle the process of printmaking and his back could not withstand long sitting periods while painting. Most of the time, he ended up fussing around in his work space until his ailments exhausted him (van Loon

1930: 567). My point of reference begins when van Loon visits Rembrandt, offering him news and interesting stories making their rounds in the neighbourhood, but Rembrandt shows no real interest. Van Loon would often offer to read a few pages of a book, which Rembrandt regularly declined. But this time Rembrandt asks van Loon to read from Genesis, specifically where Jacob wrestles with the Lord (van Loon 1930: 567-568). There is no telling how true these last accounts were, but what van Loon illustrates is a fitting example to further demonstrate Rembrandt's faith struggle. What he reveals is a vulnerable and personal moment Rembrandt expresses to God:

“And then one evening in October of the year '69, when I was sitting by his bedside (he had not been able to get up for about a fortnight), he surprised me by asking that I get him the family Bible. It was in Cornelia's room and when I called her, she brought it and put it on the table. “I wish you would read me that story about Jacob”, he said. “Do you know where to find it the story of Jacob wrestling with the Lord?” I did not know where to find it. Cornelia remembered that it was somewhere in Genesis. I turned the leaves until I found the name Jacob and then searched up and down the pages until I came to the passage which he seemed to have in mind. “Yes,” he nodded, “that is it. Where Jacob wrestles with the Lord. Now read that to me. Just that and nothing else.” And I read: “ ‘Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the break of the day. “ ‘And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. “ ‘And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. “ ‘And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. “ ‘And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a Prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.’” But when I had got that far, the sick man stirred and I stopped reading and looked at him and I saw him slowly lift his right hand and hold it close to his eyes and look at it as if it were something curious he had never observed before. And then his lips moved and very softly I heard him whisper: “Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day... there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day... but he did not give in and fought back---ah, yes, he fought back---for such is the will of the Lord---that we shall fight back...that we shall wrestle with him until the breaking of the day.” And then, with a sudden effort, he tried to raise himself from his pillow, but could not do it and he stared at me in a helpless sort of way as if asking for an answer that he knew would never come. “And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Rembrandt,” and while his gnarled old fingers, still covered with the stains of ink and paint, fell back upon his breast, “for as a Prince hast thou power with God and with men and

hast prevailed---and hast prevailed unto the last...alone...but hast prevailed unto the last.” (van Loon 1930: 567-568).

Before the existence of Jesus Christ, there are very few instances throughout the Bible where man comes face-to-face with God. Three of the most famous of these interactions with God are; Adam and Eve’s relationship with God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:26-28), God allowing Moses to see the back of Him before leaving the Mount of Sinai (Exodus 34: 5-7) and Jacob’s wrestle with the Lord (Genesis 32: 22-32). Out of the three testaments, Jacob’s wrestle with the Lord is the most physically intimate encounter with God. This symbolises the ongoing struggle between humanity’s will and God’s will. Van Loon’s use of this scripture as an allegorical representation of Rembrandt’s struggle with faith could not have been more appropriate.

Although Rembrandt is a key example when analysing the development of faith through artmaking, he is not a primary example when classifying an act of faith in an artistic process. What Rembrandt did with his Biblical work was question his faith and examine its contents visually, which was partially faith praxis, but not entirely. Rembrandt narrated his convictions and reservations about his life through the doctrine of scripture. For instance, his painting the *‘Prodigal Son in the Brothel’* (1637) (fig. 20) is a portrait of himself and his wife Saskia. Here, Rembrandt personifies the *Prodigal Son*, relishing in his early inheritance, in the heart of a brothel, with his wife posing as a prostitute, enjoying his short-lived wealth. The doctrinal teaching of the *Prodigal Son* squandering his inheritance, signifies the carnality of wilful sin (Luke 15: 11-32). Christ taught this parable as a representation of how humanity chooses the short-lived pleasures of a fallen life, instead of pursuing their first estate that was lost in the Garden of Eden; a relationship and eternal inheritance with God.

The fact that Rembrandt identified himself with wilful sin and centres himself and his wife as representatives, delineates his level of faith at the time. However, 32 years later he creates the *‘Return of the Prodigal Son’* (1669) (fig. 21). But we see no portrait of Rembrandt or his wife. Instead we see the back of the son, bald and in rags. His back to the audience hiding his face in shame, surrendered on his knees before his father. The audience does not get to see the *Prodigal Son’s* face, only the reception of his father. However, what needs to be noted here, is that this painting was done two years prior to Rembrandt’s death. The tone of this painting sings a different tune to his youthful, brothel, portrait. The presence of the *Prodigal Son* is humbling, and the

reception of the father merciful. Maybe this was Rembrandt's plea for forgiveness. Or maybe he was illustrating the final existential phase of his life.

What we can gather from how Rembrandt viewed himself and God in his artwork, is that he battled to identify with what he believed. The fact that Rembrandt had no problem inserting himself into his biblically themed artworks, signifies his identity in the midst of belief. Rembrandt's biblically themed artworks were more meditations of his relation to the scripture than mere biblical artworks. His artwork were externalised representations of his internalised grapple with faith. Although a lot of his interpretations were personal, through his artistic method, he was acting out his faith, or lack thereof. However, Rembrandt's faith praxis in artmaking was premature. I believe he was grappling with the start of Christian faith but had not completely conceived it. But it was, none the less, a first step into the realm of faith as an artistic praxis. The fact that he rejected Church doctrine and symbolism in his work implies that the practice of religious belief was an unimportant factor. His removal of the middle man (priest or clerical doctrine), unearthed a deeper understanding of the scriptures. His indirect wrestle with God in his artwork was evidence of an introspective grapple with salvation.

2.4. Faith as an artistic praxis: Makoto Fujimura; a contemporary artist who happens to be Christian

When it comes to identifying faith as an artistic praxis, it is a whole different arena to observe than examining faith in an artwork. What faith as an artistic praxis does, is move away from representing faith, and instead, practices faith as an artistic process. In more detailed terms, it is when an artist undoubtingly believes in their ideology and, through the process of faith, allows it to naturally inhabit their artmaking process. Makoto Fujimura's¹⁶ (1960) praxis is a prime example.

On his self-titled website, he has a page specially reserved for journal blogging. As much as these entries are for the public, they are also reflexive writings about himself as an artist, the work that

¹⁶ Makoto Fujimura is the appointed *Director of Fuller's Brehm Center*, and known for his work as an artist, writer, and speaker; recognised as a cultural shaper (Makoto Fujimura).

he creates and the thoughts that his career has provoked. In an entry titled, '*Visual Theology*' (2012), he writes about his journey when producing the '*The Four Holy Gospels*' (fig.22) for the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible. He elaborates on his commission; admitting that there has not been any artistic commission given for the *Four Gospels* for over 400 years. While researching for examples of visual theological precursors, he could not find any relevant artists to date. After the fact, he realised that he had very little to work with and began to question the existence and relevance of Visual Theology (Fujimura 2012).

He concedes that we do live in a visually dominant era, where the immediacy of social media, movies, series, vlogs and the like, far outweighs the popularity of literature. However, Visual Theology, in the 21st century, is scarcely practiced. When he began the project and researched Visual Theology, Fujimura admits that there was no recent work that could aid in developing a visual language on the topic. He eventually drew inspiration from Mark Rothko, William Blake and 16th century Japanese scrolls (Fujimura 2012).

But when Fujimura discusses some of his intermit pieces; where his painting interweaves with certain chapters, his greatest source of inspiration came from his training years in Nihonga. He writes:

“You notice there are lines here; and might wonder why there are lines in passages that speaks of Pharisees arguing with Jesus. When I was beginning my training in Nihonga, one of the disciplines I had to learn was to draw thousands of lines for six months. They gave me many types of brushes, many types of paper and many types of sumi ink. After a while, I learned how to mix mineral pigments with hide glue, so I began to pour colors into wet lines. I learned that depending on the weather, the moisture level, the temperature, the type of water used, the same lines drawn with the same materials did not look the same. This type of tacit knowledge one cannot learn by reading about it on the internet. One has to do due diligence to fail many times, and learn by doing. After drawing the lines, I was asked to copy ancient scrolls, and I learned that these 13th century artists understood these lines and mastered them. I could, so many centuries later, could "read" these lines and commune with the creators of these art works. In this passage, Jesus is persuading those who have their religiosity figured out that the law is only the basis of God's relationship with us. The laws seemed to me just like the basic lines. plain and rigid to some. Yet Jesus came to fulfill the law, and not to abolish it. So I decided to create a symbolic way of depicting the tension between the Pharisees and Jesus, by drawing these lines. But at the same time, I wanted to

represent Jesus' fulfillment of the law, so I poured gold and vermillion into the lines while they were wet. The gold (mixed powder with hide glue) and vermillion (also a finely ground pigment) spreads within the lines as Jesus filled the laws with divinity and his sacrificial blood." (Fujimura 2012) (fig.23).

Instead of representing the chapter in visual form, what Fujimura has done is assimilate his personal experience and knowledge of his process with the knowledge and persona of his belief. The type of artistic reasoning we see in Fujimura's entry is far removed from the reasoning of the Byzantine, Renaissance and Rembrandt's era. Although he has theological knowledge of the scriptures, his interpretation of the chapter is done out of revelation of his own artistic disposition and reflects his scriptural knowledge through his artistic process. Fujimura interprets his semi-piece as a representation of Christ's controversy with the Pharisees and all the tensions it generated. However, there is an underlining context to his work from a faith-based praxis sense. After many years of training under the discipline of Nihonga, Fujimura gathered those years and cultivated a style of his own. A style that personified his individuality, shaping his artistic humanity. Everything about his technique, from his propensity towards expressionism, to his strict use of pigments of the rarest finds, all in the confines of Nihonga, are notes in a symphony that only he could compose (Fujimura 2012). Fujimura's art is but a fraction of his entire person and does not make up the entirety of who he is, but, never-the-less, a fraction that he is highly in tune with.

When he integrates this part of himself with the manuscripts of his belief [the Bible], the chapter and Fujimura synergise. His history poured into those lines glorifies the scripture and the history scribed in the chapter, which acts as a foundation to his lines. The way Fujimura reasoned about his lines had a lot to do with the way he reflected on scripture. And the source of his reflection was his belief in the God that inhabits them.

His four main centre pieces act as meditative doorways to each chapter (fig. 22). His first painting titled '*Charis-Kairos (The Tears of Christ)*' (2013), is his introduction piece to the four gospels artworks (fig. 24). The painting acts as a tribute to the selfless choice that God made to incarnate Himself in human flesh. If we reflect on this for a second, consider the context of this choice and the events that follow, we may begin to see '*Charis-Kairos*' as more than just a painting. The basic theology of Jesus existence is that He was God incarnate that abided by the Law of the Old Testament, not breaking one commandment and became the first human being to fulfil it. Not

only did He fulfil the Law, but he overcame the fall of humanity (the inheritance of the fall of Adam and Eve). This meant, because He was without sin, there was nothing separating Him from the Creator/Abba Father. And because there was no sin separating Him from the Heavenly Father, he had restored the first estate of Adam and Eve [before the fall] (1 Corinthians 15: 45). This estate was a father and childlike relationship between Creator and humanity. Because this relationship was restored, this meant that the Kingdom of Heaven was restored to humanity through Jesus. It was through Jesus's obedience to God's Law, that he could live out life on earth as God always intended humanity to live. This is why He could perform the miracles that He did on earth, and this is why He taught with authority. He became a living example of what humanity was created to be (Romans 5: 17).

However, the perspective Fujimura chooses to reflect on this theology is personal and emotional. Because Christ is the redeemed personification of the human race, when practicing Christian faith, the main premise is to gain a better understanding of who Christ was on earth. By researching and meditating on the four gospels, a Christian can reflect on the essence and character of his being. It is through this meditation that personal faith is practiced. For a Christian, to reflect on the life of Christ is to use him as a mirror for the human soul. And so, instead of reflecting on his experience of the Gospels, Fujimura reflects on how Jesus may have felt when he witnessed and endured the fallen estate of humanity (Romans 6: 11). The second half of his title *'The Tears Of Christ'* hints at the kind of emotional state that Fujimura has channelled. The verse, I believe that Fujimura drew his inspiration from was Luke 19: 41-42, *"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes."*

In this verse, Jesus is talking to the multitudes and Pharisees of Jerusalem that gathered for his arrival. When he wept, he did not only weep because of what he knew the root of the sufferings of humanity was, but because he knew what would free them from the curse of their sufferings. But Christ also knew that they could not perceive it, and because they could not perceive it, they could not receive it. The knowledge that Jesus had to set humanity free, was the knowledge of the Kingdom of God, but humanity was still in bondage with the fallen knowledge of the world. Because of this, they could not conceive the life and ideology of Christ. This is why Jesus wept, and this is what Fujimura's *'Charis-Kairos (Tears of Christ)'* epitomized.

Fujimura's painting technique is more about the act itself, than the end result. It is more evidence of his meditation than it is a showpiece. In his short documentary on the production of the *'The Four Holy Gospels'* (2011), there are many documented scenes of him working in his studio. Most of his work is done from aerial view. Standing over his silk stretched canvas rested on the ground, he raises a small bowl above his head, filled with raw pigment and cautiously pours it onto the watered areas of the surface. The pigment falls like rain and floods the silk like tears on a cotton sweater. As Fujimura stands with his head bowed over his canvas, for a moment, his stance resembles Jackson Pollock, but his energy is not the same. Unlike Pollock, Fujimura's actions are disciplined with order. Every stance, every angle, every spray of water, dust of pigment and stroke of the brush is carefully discerned before he acts. When he narrows in on isolated areas, he hovers a beam at an intimate level over the work, strong enough to balance his body as he paints tiny gold crosses in the details (The Four Holy Gospels. n.d.).

The whole scene of Fujimura's process echoes the creative act of God. As he looks down on the blank canvas and ponders his first move, Genesis 1: 2 illuminates his contemplation, "*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*". As God reflects on the waters of Earth to call out creation, Fujimura reflects on his canvas to call out God.

On a Christian-based website, called *BioLogos*, in his statement about the artwork he elaborates on his reflexive interaction with the piece:

"So in my studio, I "consider the lilies," and take my Magi journey through the desert of the contemporary art world. I take earthly pigments (azurite, malachite, gold, platinum) and mix them with Japanese hide glue; I paint on hand-lifted Kumohada, made in the cold valley of Imadate, Japan, using brushes particularly made for heavy, granular pigments. As I pour these extravagant materials, I "paint with Jesus' tears," ephemeral and yet enduring, compassionate yet prophetic. Christ's tears are embedded in every page (sometimes literally as a theme), as an offering of God's incarnation in the Atomic age. Our imaginations, in the last century, lead to the greatest of destructions. The arts and sciences together have now a greater responsibility of not just creating something new, but reversing the curse created out of our own fallen intuitions and knowledge. That is our new Manhattan project, the star we follow into our new century, leading us on towards Christ's generative reality." (Fujimura 2010).

Fujimura's practice is multi-layered. In practice, his artistic technique is strongly Japanese, and influenced by his American culture. But the premise in which he filters these aspects of himself is dominated by his belief. When his artistic identity and Christian belief are grafted together, his identity as an artist is governed by his Christian faith. Therefore, when Fujimura creates his artwork, it is shaped by his faith. The creative act is only acted out once the meditation comes to fruition. When Fujimura creates, he stops to consider where this inspiration to create comes from. Once he identifies the source, he acts on it. In his work of *'The Four Holy Gospels'* (2011), he digs deep into the source of his belief and excavates what he discovers with his creative process.

The final step to establishing his creative act is done in faith --- In faith of the inspiration of the Bible, in faith of its theology, in faith of Jesus purpose, and in faith of Christ's legacy. Notice, that all of the things that Fujimura has faith in, are invisible. This draws on Hebrews 11:1, *'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'* What Fujimura cannot see, he hopes for within. But faith cannot exist without acts, *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* (James 2: 14-17). What can be gauged from Hebrews 11:1, is faith is belief in the absence of evidence. But James 2: 14-17 is the realisation that to act on faith is the materialisation of belief. In hindsight, to act on faith is to produce evidence. Evidence that faith has substance. This is what we witness when we view *'The Four Holy Gospels'* (2011). It is through Fujimura's artistic act, premeditated by faith, that he produces evidence of his belief.



Figure 4. *Ceiling mural in the Catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus*. Early 4th century. Rome, Italy. (Visual Resources Center Digital Image Collection).



Figure 5. *Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George* 6th or early 7th century encaustic on wood, 2' 3" x 1' 7 3/8". Collection: St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt (Hurst 2001).

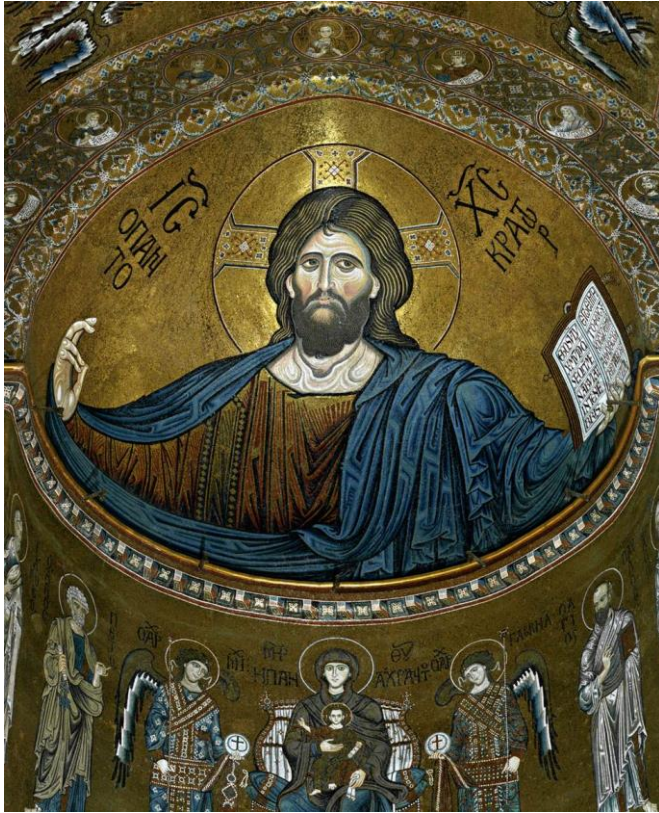


Figure 6. *Christ Pantokrator with saints and the Virgin*. 1180s. mosaics. Collection: Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily, Italy. (Monreale Cathedral: *Apse mosaic detail, Christ Pantokrator with saints and the Virgin*).

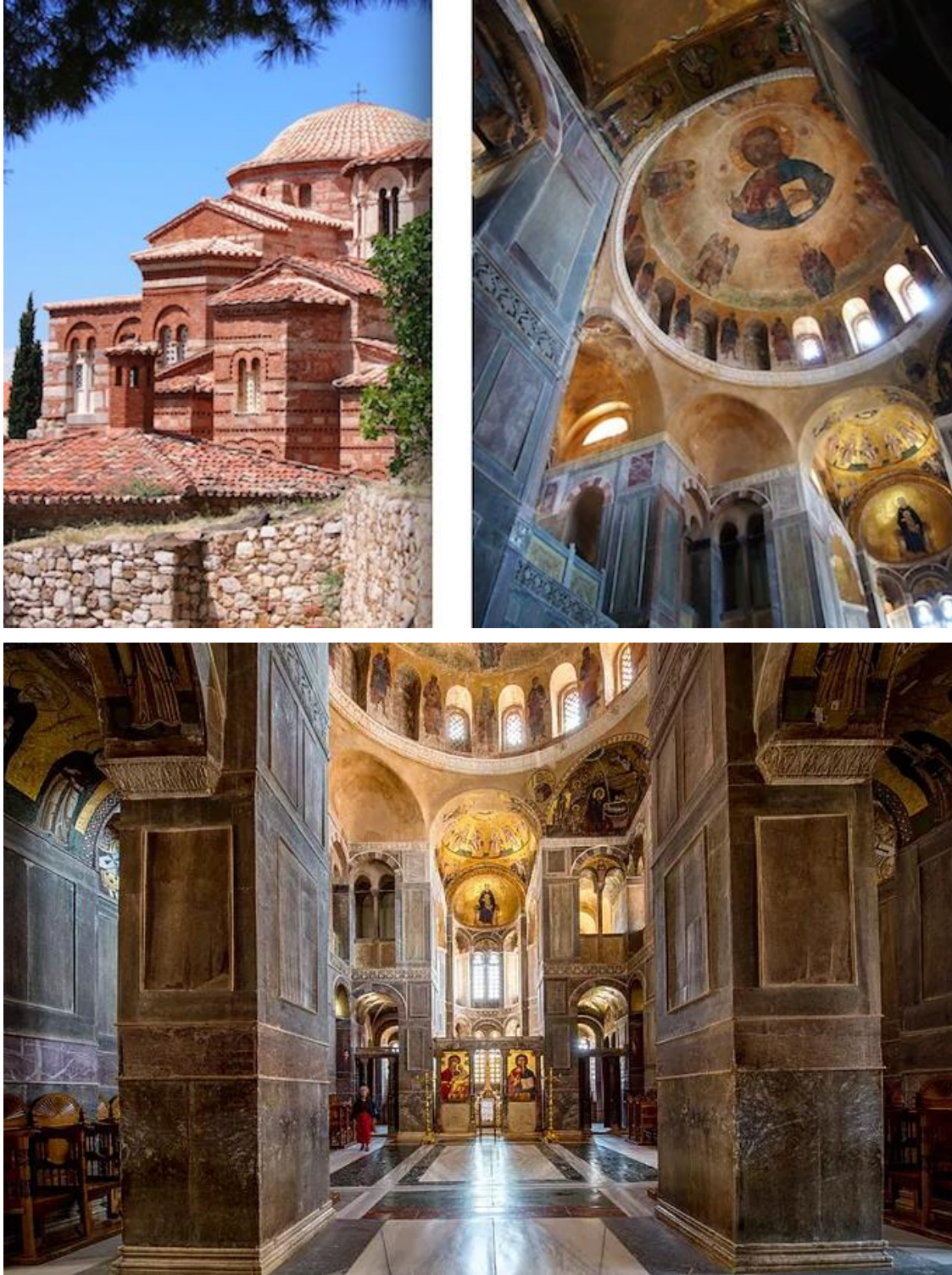


Figure 7. Exterior and interior view of: *Hosios Loukas*. Early 11th century. Mosaics. Greece. (Hurst 2001)

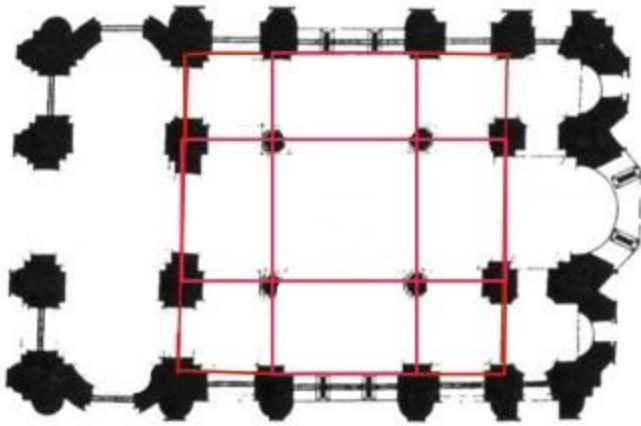


Figure 8. Cross-in-square church plan typically found in Cathedrals (red lines indicate cross-in-square structure). (Hurst 2011)



Figure 9. Cathedral vaults, *Hosios Loukas*. Early 11th century. Mosaics. Greece. (Hurst 2001).



Figure 10. One of the centered ceiling motifs: *Hosios Loukas*. Early 11th century. Mosaics. Greece. (Hurst 2001).

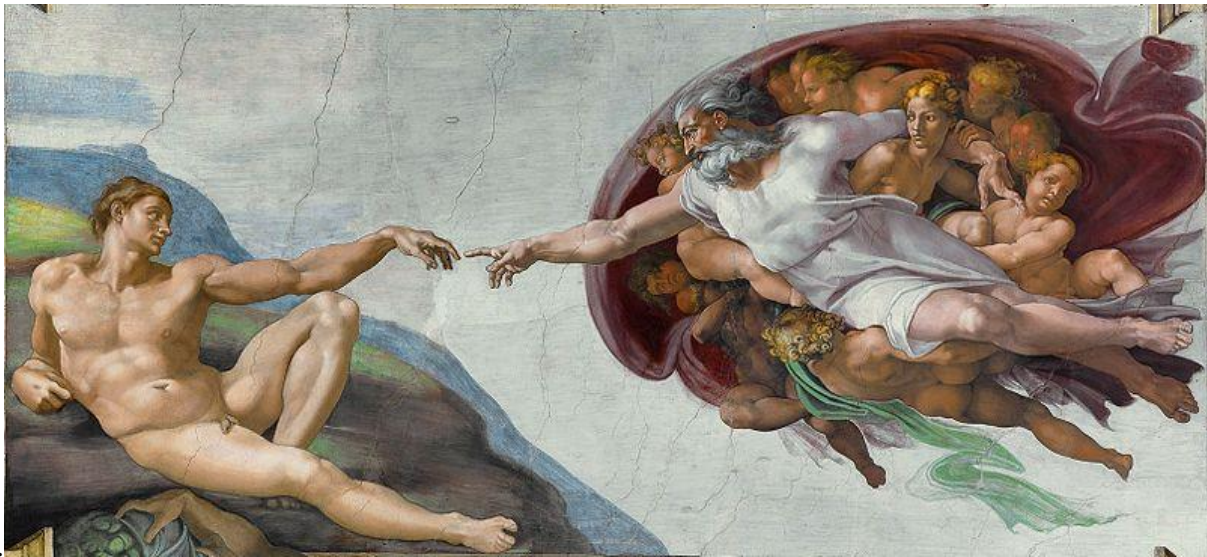


Figure 11. Michelangelo, Creation of Adam, *Sistine Chapel*. 1508-1512. Fresco. Collection: The Vatican, Rome. (Michelangelo, Creation of Adam).



Figure 12. Raphael, *School of Athens* (1509-1511). Fresco. Collection: Stanza della Segnatura, The Vatican, Rome. (Raphael, *School of Athens*)



Figure 13. Raphael, Close up of Raphael: *School of Athens*. 1509-1511. Fresco. Collection: Stanza della Segnatura, The Vatican, Rome. (Raphael, *School of Athens*).



Figure 14. Rembrandt, *An Old Woman Reading*. 1631. Oils on oak panel, 60 x 48 cm. (The Rembrandt Database).



Figure 15. Rembrandt, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*. 1625. Oils on oak panel, 89,5 x 123,6 cm. (The Rembrandt Database.)



Figure 16. Rembrandt, Close up of Rembrandt: *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*. 1625. Oils on oak panel, 89,5 x 123,6 cm. (The Rembrandt Database).



Figure 17. Rembrandt, *Christ in the storm on the Sea of Galilee*. 1633. Oils on canvas, 160 x 128 cm. (The Rembrandt Database).



Figure 18. Rembrandt, *The incredulity of St Thomas*. 1634. Oil on oak panel, 53,1 x 50,5cm. (The Rembrandt Database)

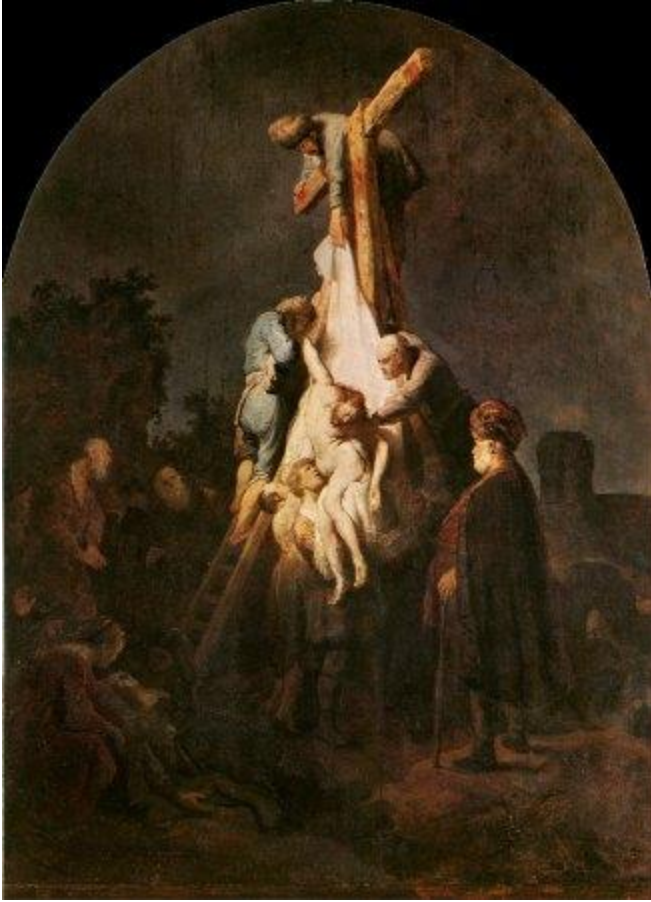


Figure 19. Rembrandt, *The descent from the Cross*. 1632-1633. Oil on cedarwood panel, 89,4 x 65, 2 cm. (The Rembrandt Database).



Figure 20. Rembrandt, *Self portrait as the prodigal son*. 1634-1636. Oil on canvas, 161 x131 cm. (The Rembrandts Database).



Figure 21. Rembrandt, *Return of the prodigal son*. 1660-1669. Oil on canvas, 262 x 205 cm. (The Rembrandt Database)



Figure 22. Makoto Fujimura, *The Four Holy Gospels*; [from left to right] *Matthew- Consider the Lilies*, *Mark-Water Flames*, *Luke- Prodigal God* & *John- In the Beginning*. 2011. Mineral pigment, gold and platinum on Kumohada, 48 x 60 inches. (Makoto Fujimura)

19



Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ²And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ⁷They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" ⁸He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."¹¹

¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." ¹¹But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

¹³Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ¹⁴but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁵And he laid his hands on them and went away.

¹⁶And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "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." ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." ²⁷Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed

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Figure 23. Makoto Fujimura, Matthew chapter 19 from *The Four Holy Gospels*. 2011. Crossway Books, USA. (Makoto Fujimura).

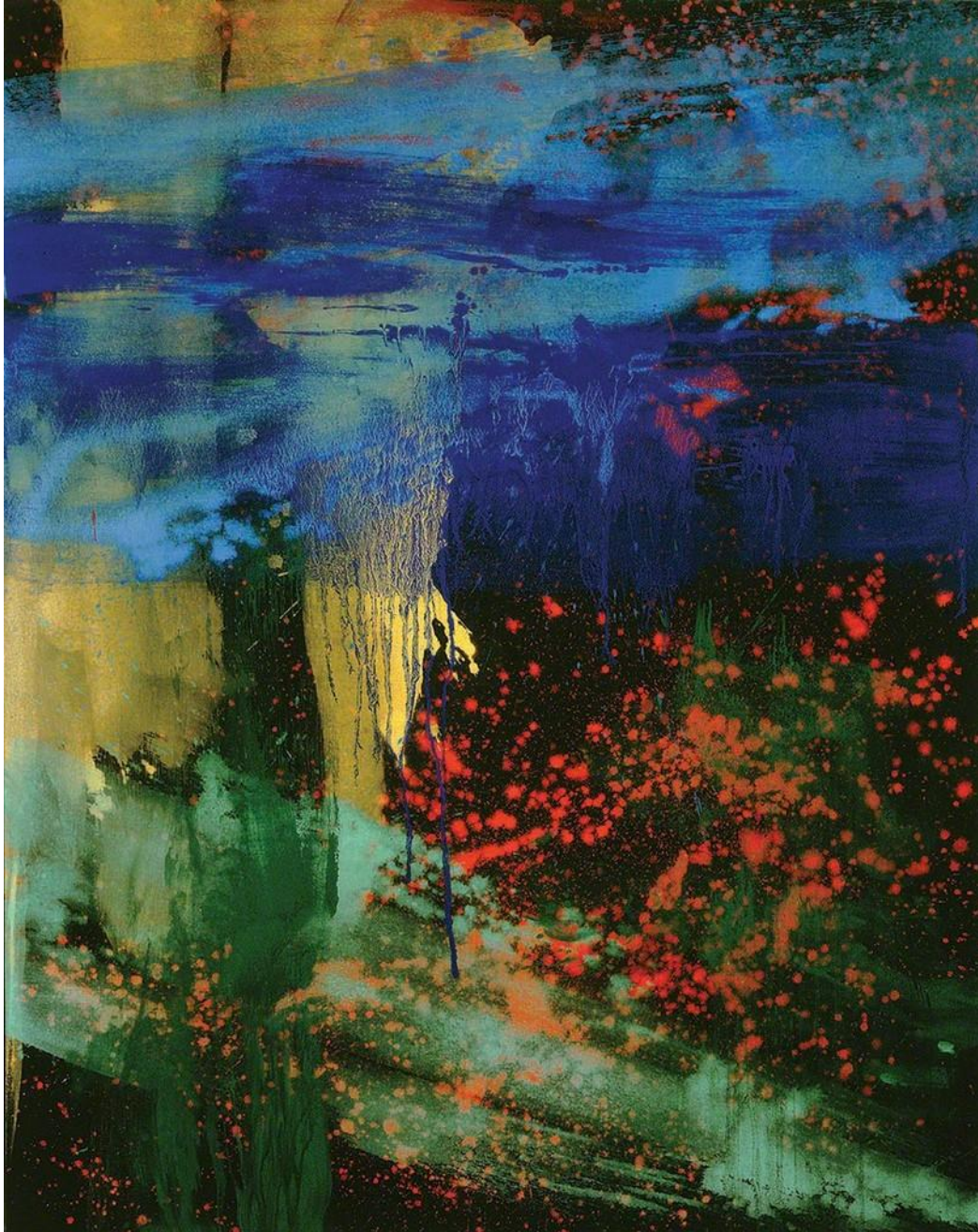


Figure 24. Makoto Fujimura, *Charis Kairos (The Tears of Christ)*. 2011. Mineral pigments, gold on Belgium Linen, 80 x 64 inches. Makoto Fujimura. (Makoto Fujimura).

Chapter Three:

Faith in a doubtful space:

Reasoning faith in contemporary art

3.1. Literature review for chapter three

Where chapter two applies the method of chapter one to explore the progression of faith in art, chapter three is where I will discuss my process in developing the idea of faith as an artistic praxis. In chapter two, I examined certain periods that explore faith according to its historical discourse. During this exploration, I stipulate how faith was viewed artistically, in these periods, and how they developed according to their social, spiritual and philosophical constructs. By applying my method of faith to these movements and artists' artworks, an understanding of how faith has evolved over time and the artistic motives behind these artworks could be distinguished. This helped clarify the difference between religious art and faith based-art.

Makoto Fujimura's praxis was a fitting ending to introduce how faith is viewed by a Christian in a contemporary environment. His work also gave insight on how an artist, who happens to be Christian, views and produces art in a contemporary sense---which leads me to my own praxis and views on contemporary art. However, because my views and experiences were developed during my time as an art student within an academic environment, my synopsis will be subjective in description and perspective. Because experiences and perceptions are viewed as relative to discourse and conceptual reality, I have chosen to explain my work as the intimate thoughts of my artistic process. This entails descriptions of my personal belief, how it plays out in doubt, my faith process, how my views influence how I experience and perceive contemporary art and the struggles that I encountered. All of this will be reasoned according to my postgraduate artwork that conceived these ideas and issues in contemporary art.

In section 3.2 '*Genesis: the beginning of my faith praxis*' I will briefly touch on how my *Life Source One* (2015) practical initiated the idea to tackle my identity and faith in my artwork. This will touch on the construct of the Christian identity, the image of an *unseen* God, how the Christian relates to His image as consciousness, and how this reflects God's image. The literature used to

explore these ideas will be scriptures analysed from the Bible and Rene Descartes', '*Discourse on the Method and the Meditations*' (1968). The artwork that follows section 3.2, is an account of the development of my faith-based praxis. Here, I split the process of my conceptual development into five phases. The first is 3.3. *The Process of artistic doubt: a Christian's wrestle with God*, the second; 3.4. *Faith in a doubtful space: Faith and Postmodern thought*, the third; 3.5. *Doubt in a faithless space: Foundations and ruins*, fourth; 3.6. *Faith in a faithless space: The praxis of faith in a contemporary sense*, and lastly; 3.7. '*Working out salvation with fear and trembling: Printmaking, faith and its process*'.

Section 3.3. '*The Process of artistic doubt: a Christian's wrestle with God*', will explore the first conceptualised stages of my artistic identity in relation to the image of God. One of the many popular metaphors of the image of God from a Biblical standpoint, is the allegory of God as the *Rock*. This was the image that dominated my interpretation of God's image when exploring my faith in my artwork. To clarify where the metaphorical meaning of the *Rock* comes from and how it personifies one of the most important personality traits of God from a Christian stance, I will conduct a brief theological study of Biblical texts that elaborates on this aspect of God's image. In section 3.4. '*Faith in a doubtful space: faith and postmodern thought*', I will examine the polarising struggle of practicing artistic faith with a postmodern education. Here I will be showcasing the drawings that followed my *Life Source One* (2015) prints, discussing how these drawings illuminate my struggle with postmodern philosophy and how this struggle became an act of artistic doubt. Hans Bertens', '*The Idea of the Postmodern: A history*' (1995) and Stuart Sim's, '*The Routledge companion to Postmodernism*' (2001) will be referenced when explaining the premise of Postmodernism. I will be using Tillich's '*Dynamics of Faith*' (1957) to delineate the similarities between the concept of *sceptical doubt* and a postmodern attitude. This will better articulate my stance on practicing faith while influenced by postmodern thought and the way its philosophy engendered doubt in my artistic praxis.

In 3.5 '*Doubt in a faithless space: foundations and ruins*, I revisit *August Review* titled, '*Threshold*' (2017), where I exhibited my rock drawings for the first time. Before the exhibition I reserved two weeks to draw on the walls in the corner of the gallery. The experience of drawing my rocks on these walls and how they interacted with the environment developed a second phase of my drawing meditation. It opened new perspectives to consider after I reflected on the

drawings within the gallery. In this section, I discuss how the environment in which I conceived my drawings became a reflexive space for my artistic crisis. Using Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of space* (1965), in connection with the designated space that I construct my drawings, I will be using Bachelard's allegory of the *corner* as a reference to the introspective meditations. I will be relating the metaphor of the corner to the meditative space of the soul and will touch on the focal point of soul baring meditations. This will entail a brief look at the architectural use of the *corner* and how its structural foundation is responsible for upholding and defining the building's construction. This will eventually lead to how this is symbolic in Christian faith in all aspects of personal identity, and how this exhibition reflected my struggle with artistic identity. This will expand on the idea of conceptual faith within the gallery space and how it translated visually.

Section 3.6. *'Faith in a faithless space: the praxis of faith in a contemporary sense'*, will be the result of section 3.5's reflections, discussing how contemporary art, in the guise of the gallery space, has become an environment for alternative faiths. This will draw on how an artist's exhibited work acts as evidence of their personal faith in a faithless environment, and how perceptions of faith, in a contemporary sense, have relativised the idea of a god. Here I will draw on James Elkins' conclusion of *'On the Strange place of religion in contemporary art'* and Robin. M. Jensen's *'The Substance of things seen: art, faith and the Christian community'* for constructive solutions on how topics like religion can be viewed contemporarily. In addition, I will be introducing the idea that secular ideologies [in the form of philosophy] can also be viewed as an ideological faith. This is to bridge the unrelatable gap between religious and secular perspectives in contemporary art. And to expound on how I made the transition from viewing my artistic praxis as an experience of doubt, to a praxis in faith.

In 3.7 *'Working out salvation with fear and trembling: Printmaking, faith and its process'* (2017), I explain how my printmaking process resonates with this existential grapple that I have between faith and doubt. And I interpret this grapple through the printmaking process mezzotint. Here, I explain how my mezzotint process became a metaphor of how I reasoned faith amidst the prospect of doubt. I relate a lot of my empirical experiences with my faith to scriptures from the Bible to elaborate on how faith is practiced from a Christian stance. And to give a descriptive account of the printmaking process I reference from Walter Chamberlain's *'The Thames and Hudson Manual of Etching and Engraving'*, 1972, to define the uses and materiality of the

printmaking tools used. This part of the chapter is the detailed embodiment of my practice and how it developed into a faith-based praxis.

3.2. Genesis: the beginning of my faith praxis

In my fourth year of Visual Arts [BA], I approached the idea of reimaging Genesis chapter one. My objective was to engage with the chapter without religious bias or influence of church culture. After three years of studying and producing artwork according to workshop briefs, I wanted to venture into the personal interaction between an artist and their work, making my fourth year the perfect condition for such an undertaking. I did not want to produce artwork for the sake of conveying a researched hypothesis or collective idea, but instead, I wanted to create a body of work that questioned our motives to create as artists. However, the construct of my question was limited to my personal knowledge as an individual and years as an art student. This entailed my personal history, my identity, my beliefs and my education. After examining the embodiment of my personal knowledge, I realised that my beliefs were the primary influencer of my individuality. At this realisation, I began to examine why I believed in what I believed in, as an artist. I questioned why I allowed my beliefs to influence the way I viewed art and created art.

Instead of answering this question via philosophical means---like Rembrandt, I decided to wrestle my belief with my artistic inclinations and anticipate the outcome. However, before I could embark on my existential grapple, I had to identify the core of my belief. The Triune God of the Bible was [and is] the core of my belief. Attempting to understand God as a three-person entity was a loaded and complex notion to comprehend artistically, and as a starting point. Therefore, in order to simplify the process, I decided to start from the [literal] beginning of my faith, from Genesis chapter one, examining the first act of God and the emergence of human identity. What I recollected from the chapter was the first interaction between God and the Universe; the Creator and the created, and the intimate creation of humanity. At the end of the chapter, humanity is the last to be created, yet God establishes them as the height of His creation. He had created the universe to house his most prized creation, which He identified as, “His own image” (Genesis 1: 26-27).

This idea that humanity is made in the likeness of God, is essentially the ethos of a Christian's identity, but it is also the most wrestled with aspect of the Christian identity. The foremost reason is because God is not physically or visually accessible. He is the *Unseen or Invisible God*¹⁷. This is the soul of the struggle, for how can a Christian believe in and identify with someone [or something] they cannot see, hear or touch? There would need to be evidence to claim such a belief and the only verifiable evidence for Christian belief is the Bible. But to read the Bible and view it as evidence is not enough for an individual to be inspired to believe, they must come to the conclusion that everything that they are reading is true. There would need to be a sense of conviction on their part, ultimately that the Bible bears truth. It is through this conviction, that the individual would apply and live out this truth in their life. But fundamentally, this kind of 'truth abiding life' can only be cultivated by faith. Again, we can reflect on Hebrews 11: 1, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" and an additional verse, that simplifies Hebrews 11:1 idiom is 2 Corinthians 5:7, "*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*" For a Christian, to "walk by faith, [and] not by sight", is to hope on what we believe is true, despite lack of tangible evidence. To "walk" by it, is to act upon it. And to act upon it is to produce evidence of our belief.

Although I did not know it at the time, it was through seeking out my identity as God's image and acting out my meditations of His existence through my artwork, that I worked out the substance of my faith. Since God's creative act of Genesis One was the only physicality that I could go by in resembling a likeness to my own, I decided to act upon this intuition. It is through this act that I recognised the image of God was not a material presence, but rather a consciousness. How I came to this surmise was by reasoning, that if the creation of the Universe and the substance of it was the evidence of His consciousness, then the creation of my artwork was the evidence of my consciousness. To help elaborate on this idea that consciousness is the true image of a human being, Descartes', 'Sixth Meditation: *Of the Existence of Material Things, and of the Real Distinction between the Soul and the Body of Man*', postulates his reasoning for concluding that his consciousness---or in simplistic terms, his soul---is the quintessence of his existence, he states:

¹⁷ "Who is the of the invisible God, the first born of every creature:" (Colossians 1:15) and "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27).

“And although perhaps (or rather as I shall shortly say, certainly,) I have a body to which I am very closely united, nevertheless, because, on one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and because, on the other hand I have a distinct idea of the body in so far as it is only an extended thing but which does not think, it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.” (1968: 156).

There are two points that Descartes makes while distinguishing the essence of his existence that relates to my position. The first; he refers to his body as his limitation. Descartes’ body is but a shell of his true self, that helps his consciousness live out life in a material world. However, his body is not the one in control, his mind is. He infers that the thinking process of his consciousness is confirmation of his existence and that his bodily evidence of his existence is but a tangible impression of his true image. Secondly, the label he uses to signify his consciousness is the exact label that God gives Himself. Where Descartes says, “...it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.” echoes two Bible verses. The first verse, Exodus 3: 14, depicts God sharing his plans to evacuate Israel out of Egypt, with Moses. When Moses asks by what name the people of Israel should know Him by, God responds; “*I Am, who I Am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.*”. The second verse is John 8: 58, where Jesus causes controversy by referring to himself as *I Am*, “*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am.*”. Exodus 3:14, was the first time God established who He was as God to the nation of Israel. In John 8:58 was the first time Jesus made Himself known as God incarnate. God’s proclamation as *I Am* is justified by His eternal existence (Exodus 3:14). There is no end or beginning to His existence, He just always *was* and *is*, an absolute (Revelation 22: 13). However, Descartes has a beginning and an end, and he identifies this as the limits of his existence. When he professes that he is *I am*, he was not identifying with “*I Am who I Am*” like God does in Exodus, but rather with, “*I am what I am*”. Descartes is not the first person to refer to himself in this way. In 1 Corinthians 15: 10, Paul’s letter to the church of Corinth, he confirms that, “*By the grace of God, I am what I am.*”. To identify with what you are is to reason that you come from something, and because God is omnipotent, and humanity finite, we can only surmise that Descartes comes from God. If this is the case, then where God affirms that humanity is made in His own image, then humanity is made in the likeness of God’s consciousness.

Descartes' identification of consciousness with "I am", is an identification with the Image of the infinite *I Am*. But humanity's *I am* will forever remain in small letters. We are limited versions of a limitless God. Our mortal bodies and minds are what we inhabit to express the hidden image of God within our mortal selves. In all, this is how I began to reason my resemblances to God's image. In addition, this revelation pieced the puzzle of my own understanding as to why I create as an artist.

Reflecting on chapter one's sub-section 1.3 '*How Faith develops: the person behind the faith*', the described process between the unconscious and conscious activity of faith was first ascertained during my *Life Source One* (2015) process. After determining that God's Image was consciousness, I observed His creative process of Genesis one as an act of conscious thought. It is during this observation that I premeditated this process of creative consciousness into my method of artmaking. Where the Spirit of God glides over the formless waters, we read into His introspective phase. He sees that the earth is without form and void. He ponders on its substance, and what He does next, reveals His introspection extrospectively. He acts upon his thoughts and creates as He speaks, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:2-3). Like God, I looked upon a brass surface that was void of my creation (fig. 25). With every rocking of my brass plate and every new image forged out on its stippled surface, I witnessed the same chain of events in my creative process. I observed the verse, I premeditated it and then I revealed the meditation through my printmaking process. What I gained from this experience was a deeper understanding of how faith works. Just like Hebrews 11:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:7, I hoped (believed) on the things not yet seen, introspectively, and by "walking by faith" I produced what I hoped for extrospectively. It was by faith that God spoke creation into being and it is by faith in my ability to create, that I produced my prints (fig. 26). This is what inspired the idea that faith could be an artistic praxis. But I had yet to work out its method amidst the process of doubt in my postgraduate years.

3.3. The process of artistic doubt: A Christians wrestle with God

During the production of *Life Source One*, I had an additional collection of drawings that I was producing on the side lines. At the time, I did not see how these drawings tied in with *Life Source One* (2015), yet they were very much a part of the process. The first of these drawings were

detailed illustrations of floating rocks. They were simple felt pen sketches highlighted with a white sketch pencil (fig. 27). Post *Life Source One*, as I continued to produce these drawings, their aesthetic evolved. I became less concerned with the details and highlights, and more engrossed with its movement, use of space and mass production (fig. 28). In addition, there was no physical reference for these rocks. They were mere entities that seemed to resonate with the state of mind I was in while producing *Life Source One* (2015). While my mezzotints were a premeditation of my understanding of Genesis one, the rock drawings seemed to be a materialised version of my actual meditations. In other words, where the prints of *Life Source One* (2015) were an examination of my existential grapple, the rock drawings were the manifestation of that grapple.

Reflecting on these drawings, they seemed to generate the same energy as Genesis 1:2, where “the earth was without form and void” and where the Spirit of God moved over it. But the element that I was drawn to the most was the fractured rocks and how their movement seemed to be in a timeless state. This reminded me of certain verses that identified God as a Rock. In the Bible, the rock is often used as a metaphor for one of God’s many personality traits. Often, God is given individual names to address distinct aspects of His character. The Rock is one of them. In scripture, the Rock predominantly portrayed God as indestructible, foundational and dependable. This metaphorical image acted as a totem pole for Christian faith (Psalm 71:3). Some of the most famous verses depicting personal faith in the Rock is found in Psalms. One such verse is seen in Psalm 61: 2, where King David muses over God being his source of refuge. The verse reads; “*From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*”. Another scripture, that describes a literal encounter between humanity and the rock, is Numbers 20: 7-13;

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to

sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.” (Numbers 20: 7-13).

The events described in these verses can often be interpreted in three different ways. The first is the literal; second, the prophetic; and third, the allegorical. In literal terms, what we witness in Numbers 20, is God giving Moses instructions on how to provide water for the nation of Israel. The back story to this scenario, however, is the exit of Israel from Egypt, into the desert, in pursuit of the promise land (Exodus 14). But the Israelites and their flocks were in desperate need of water, burdening Moses to inquire God for help. God gave Moses specific instructions on how to provide water. He told Moses to speak to the rock in front of the people. God wanted Moses to perform a miracle before the people of Israel, so that they could witness the power of the God that they served.

What needs to be taken into account here, is that before Moses introduced *I Am* to the nation of Israel, the only gods that they knew and grew accustomed to, were the gods of Egypt. They had grown and lived under the education and customs of Pharaoh for many generations, which influenced the way they perceived gods in general. However, they had yet to discover who the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was, and understand how He operated as an omnipotent God. Performing miracles and fulfilling prophecy was God’s way of showing His character and loyalty to His people. God’s time in the desert with Israel, was a time for Israel to get acquainted with their god. But the moment Moses struck the rock twice, instead of speaking to it once, it was viewed as an act of defiance to God. However, there was a reason why Moses chose to strike the rock instead of speaking to it. Archeologically, it was discovered that when shepherds lead their flocks into the desert, if there were no wells or oasis in sight, shepherds would often forage amongst mountainous rocks for signs of mineral springs hidden in them.¹⁸ If they found such a rock (or surface), they would strike the weakest part of the rock with their staff, releasing water, creating an artisan well.¹⁹ When Moses chose to act on his own knowledge as a former shepherd,

¹⁸ “An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing rock. Water-bearing rocks are permeable, meaning they have openings that liquids and gases can pass through. Sedimentary rock such as sandstone, as well as sand and gravel, are examples of water-bearing rock. The top of water level in an aquifer is called the water table.” (Energy Education. 2017. S.v. ‘*aquifer*’).

¹⁹ To date, these rock springs are known as groundwater. Middle Eastern and Eastern Nomads are known to access these aquifers from hardened earth or similar earth sources (Philips 2001).

he chose to have faith in his own knowledge rather than the instructions of God (Exodus 3:1). Moses' act of disobedience was an act of faith in humanity's own abilities, not God's. When God saw it, he realised that the present generation of Israel had no faith in Him. This is why He could not bring them into the *promised land*, because in order for them to be His nation, they had to have faith in Him as their God.

The prophetic and allegorical perspective is a partnered interpretation. A common practice utilized by Christians when observing the Old Testament is interpreting the scripted events as a prophecy of the life of Christ, but it is often read as an allegorical idiom. In Numbers 20:7-13, the rock that Moses strikes represents the striking (or beating) of Christ²⁰ (Matthew 27:30). The water that flows from the rock represents the water (mingled with blood) that flows out of the wound of Jesus' lifeless body---when the Roman soldiers pierced his side with a spear to gauge whether He was dead or alive (John 19:34). The water that the people of Israel consume from the rock represents the *Living Waters* that is consumed [spiritually] by those who believe in the redemptive power of Jesus death as a sacrifice of God (John 3: 10-14).

Exodus is an important text to study when understanding the context of the *Rock* in Christian faith. The image that the Rock personifies is a place of refuge, where help comes from and the foundation on which faith is built (Psalm 18:2). Essentially, to have faith in God is to undoubtedly depend on Him. But my constant production of broken stone and rock spoke of something other than faith, and the *Image* that represented the foundation of my faith was shattered. I found the personification of my faith as disintegrated rock disconcerting, and its ascension into an expansive void, melancholic. As a creative, while reflecting on my fractured perception of God, I wondered whether my perception as an artist had something to do with it. As I clearly stated before, a Christian's identity is discovered in the image of God. But for reasons unbeknown to me, my identity as an artist was void of God's image. I questioned why this was the case, and wondered if the reason was because my identity as an artist was occupied by a belief other than God. I began to question what I believed as an artist and what I discovered was that I believed in doubt.

²⁰ “And some began to spit on him, cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.” (Mark 14: 65).

3.4. Faith in a doubtful space: faith and contemporary art

During my undergraduate years of visual art, the many different movements of art, their influential paradigms of philosophical thought and the evolvement of visual language was part of our syllabus. However, when developing an eye for contemporary art and studying the theory around it, postmodernism was our main academic premise and guideline for observational practice. The consensus of postmodernism is that it is a rejection of modernism and its structuralist theoretical method (Bertens 1995: 20-23). It engenders an attitude of scepticism in philosophical foundationalism and any ideology that purports objective or subjective truth. This includes objective reality, universalism, morality, truth, human nature, reason, language and social progress. It estimates that reality, knowledge and value are constructs of discourse, which is relative to societal/cultural traditions, and postulates conceptual constructs. At the crux of its theory, it is governed by the belief that there is no real truth; rejecting absolutes, and advocating a relativist view when inspecting metaphysical, epistemological and ethical paradigms (Sims 2001: 3-5).

Unequivocally, postmodernism's antithesis is the hypothesis of faith. Where faith maintains that to believe in a single ideology is a pursuit of truth, postmodernism rebuts as relative to culture (or religion). Where faith claims belief is personified by the totality of an individual, postmodernism asserts as conceptual construct. Where faith claims ultimacy, postmodernism argues no absolutes. And where faith muses truth, postmodernism rejects it (Sims 2001: 366-7). However, to the hypothesis of faith, postmodernism is viewed as a theory of doubt. The most relatable theory of doubt, that mirror's postmodernism's position, is Tillich's "sceptical doubt", he states:

The sceptical doubt is an attitude toward all beliefs of man, from the sense experiences to religious creeds. It is more an attitude than an assertion. For as an assertion it would conflict with itself. Even the assertion that there is no possible truth for man would be judged by the sceptical principle and could not stand as an assertion. Genuine sceptical doubt does not use the form of an assertion. It is an attitude of actually rejecting any certainty. Therefore, it cannot be refuted logically. It does not transform its attitude into a proposition. Such an attitude necessarily leads either to despair or cynicism, or to both alternately. And often, if this alternative becomes intolerable, it leads to indifference and the attempt to develop an attitude of complete unconcern. But since man is that being who is essentially concerned about his being, such an escape finally breaks down. This is the dynamics of sceptical doubt." (1957: 22).

During my undergraduate years, through every workshop brief and lecture, my visual perspective and practice was nurtured by the ideology of postmodern thought. Generally, its philosophical attitude towards art was an ideal method to observe humanity's limits and finite comprehension. But when wanting to explore humanity's conception of the infinite or phenomenological concepts, it inhibits the exploration rather than encourage it. From the beginning of my Postgraduate years, during the post-production of *Life Source One*, this was my dilemma. I had created a body of work examining my faith but tried to reason it with postmodern thought. Ultimately, I had conceived a faith-based praxis on the precepts of doubt, which caused my work to implode on itself. The collision course of faith and doubt had become a subconscious mantra that created a creative loop in my praxis. Although consciously I had created eight mezzotints of Genesis chapter one, illustrating the expanse of the firmaments to birthing the fish of the sea, subconsciously I was stuck on the verse where the earth was without form and void. I deduced that this was because I was in a stasis of artistic doubt.

For the majority of my postgraduate career, I habitually created felt pen drawings of a suspended shattered rock in its most minimal form. I tried using different inks of different colour, different surfaces and textured papers to promote development. I even tried to integrate them into different visual scenes, but inevitably reverted to its formless void and minimal dimensions (fig. 29). Drawing them was addictive, but the result unfulfilling. They had no meaning and no context, and yet the act of drawing them roused a high. The act of drawing the rocks released a contemplative pressure from my mind. The more I drew them, the more I felt the need to draw them. Like Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit of God moves upon the endless expanse of an untouched universe, I had motioned towards the expanse of faith in an untouched region of artistic conception. But I had used the wrong frame of mind to conceive it, I had observed artistic faith with sceptical doubt. This resulted as a shattered image of faith about my God and my identity as an artist. Instead of conveying the Spirit moving over the deep, I conveyed the shrapnel and debris of a devastated faith, moving through an endless void of doubt. In likeness to Moses striking the rock with his rod, I struck my rock with poststructuralism. Where Moses reasoned his knowledge over God's instruction, I reasoned my fine arts knowledge over faith. Although the image of the Rock

was whole and foundational in all other aspects of my identity, it was absent in my artistry. What I had gathered from my experience of my drawings was an existential crisis in art.

3.5. *Doubt in a Faithless space: ruins of conceptual foundations*

For August Review (2017), I decided to draw my expanse of rocks on the walls of GUS. The reason I chose to exhibit my drawings this way, was to reflect on the misplacement of faith in the very space that discouraged it. Conscious of the fact that I had to share the space with other Master students work, I organised with the managing curator a small space to work on for two weeks. After great deliberation, I had settled on a corner of the gallery space, closest to the entrance. Nothing was different about my drawing process other than my drawing surface and its environment. With the same felt pens and black inks that I used on different paper, I drew my rocks on the walls (fig. 30).

During the time that I worked in the gallery, I reflected on the visual context of my drawings in the corner of its space. My literal understanding of the corner was related to how I perceived the space in general. At first glance, its only purpose was to limit wall space and form the foundational structure of the building. It seemed to be the point where space is hampered. When thinking about how the corner interacts with a home environment, it is often where a tall lamp would stand, where the spider decides to weave its web, where a child is sent as punishment and where the day casts most of its shadow (Bachelard 1956: 154). But in a gallery space, it is the most unappealing and overlooked space to exhibit. Yet in every gallery [with the exception of a spherical gallery space], it exists. Although the corner is probably the most neglected part of a gallery space, it is essential to the space's foundation. In Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, when discussing the poetics of a corner, he quotes a line from Noel Arnaud's *L'état d'ébauche*:

“Je suis l'espace ou je suis (I am the space where I am.)” (1956: 156).

He uses this quote to affirm his reflections of the corner, where he states:

“The point of departure of my reflections is the following: every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house. The documents available in literary works are few, for the reason that this purely physical contraction

into oneself already bears the mark of a certain negativism. Also, in many respects, a corner that is “lived in” tends to reject and restrain, even to hide, life. The corner becomes a negation of the Universe. In one’s corner one does not talk to oneself. When we recall the hours we have spent in our corners, we remember above all silence, the silence of our thoughts. This being the case, why describe the geometry of such indigent solitude? Psychologists and, above all, metaphysicians will find these circuits of topo- analysis quite useless. They know how to observe “uncommunicative” natures directly. They do not need to have a sullen person in a corner described to them as “cornered.” But it is not easy to efface the factors of place. And every retreat on the part of the soul possesses, in my opinion, figures of havens. That most sordid of all havens, the corner, deserves to be examined.” (Bachelard 1956: 155-156).

Where Descartes reflects on the evidence of his consciousness, Bachelard reflects on the environment of the soul (or consciousness). He uses the structure of a house or home, as a metaphor to differentiate the phases in which consciousness functions. Each chapter of his book embodies a space, its ornaments, its shape and what these constructs mean to the occupant (Bachelard 1956). He affirms that the corner is the denial of space, leaving little or no room for distractions. It is where visual range is cut off and where isolation is inescapable. When he muses about the corner, he interprets it as a place of singularity, silence and meditation. In allegorical terms the corner represents a place of deep introspection for the soul (Bachelard 1956: 155-156.)

When observing the entirety of the gallery’s architecture, it still maintained elements of its former ecclesiastic image. Before GUS became the gallery of Stellenbosch University it used to be a church, (precisely an Evangelical Lutheran Church). Its architect was the late German born Carl Otto Hager (1813-1898), who was formally known as the local portrait painter and photographer in Stellenbosch, but his architectural work was his greatest legacy. The church was first erected in 1854, although slightly altered by maintenance, its foundation and remnants of its neo-gothic style, remained intact (Carl Otto Hager. n.d.). 164 years later, the only elements that resemble religious emblems is the face of its entrance, a high arched roof and cathedral-like windows. Its interior and exterior were white-washed, reducing its aesthetic to its bare minimum (fig. 31). By reflecting on what the building used to represent and what it represents now, what I recognised, was a reversal in roles. Where the building had once symbolised an environment of faith, it had become a symbol of faithlessness. It had become a place to house artwork, specifically new

artwork. When it was time to dismount an exhibit, the space is stripped down to the bones of its panel laden walls. There is never a trace of the previous exhibition or event. And when the gallery is without artwork, it is in a constant state of readiness for something new, leaving the identity of the gallery space imageless. In effect, the gallery is groomed for the contemporary.

When a new exhibition is installed, the walls are no longer bare, but becomes part of the artist's work. When an artist curates their work according to the space, for the duration of the exhibit, the space embodies a name, a title, a concept, an aesthetic and hums the voice of the artist. People come in, observe in silence; some negotiate whether to purchase a work or two and others discuss the work amongst themselves. Eventually the duration of the exhibition comes to an end, a new exhibit begins, and the cycle continues. What the gallery is, is a formless universe to the curator and the artist. It is a void, a space to start afresh. It is where the foundations are founded before the inhabitants are assembled (Bachelard 1956: 60-61).

When looking into the foundations of sound architecture, the corner is essential to structural soundness. The traditional method known as the *foundation stone* or *cornerstone* is fundamentally the stone that sets the structural tone of the building, and it is always established in the corner. This is the stone that all other stones imitate in pattern and layout. Without the cornerstone, there is no way for the rest of the stones to reference its method of structure (Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2008. Sv '*Cornerstone*'). Standing back and reflecting on my drawing in the corner of the gallery, this idea of the cornerstone and my broken rocks and everything that it embodied began to take shape. The corner, as a meditative space, became my extrospective translation of my introspection of artistic doubt. Just like the persona of the Rock symbolised God's faithfulness to humanity, the cornerstone has its respective Biblical symbolism too. Following the allegorical/prophetic interpretation of Numbers 20: 7-13, the prophetic aspect can be explored further in Isaiah 28:16: "*Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste [or "be disappointed" in English Standard Version translation]*". The theological interpretation and Christian belief of this text is that God is foretelling the first coming of Jesus Christ. Where God refers to Jesus as a stone, He is referring to the likeness to God (The Rock of salvation). Where God states that he will be a cornerstone, He is saying that Christ will be the first building-block of something new. When God details His plans to Isaiah about His

coming, He breaks down the coming of Christ into three phases. The first phase is the “foundation stone”, which signifies the ministry that would begin with Jesus. The second, is the “tried stone”, depicting that He would endure the same temptations and sufferings as humanity and would prevail on the cross. And thirdly, “a precious stone”, where His sacrifice and resurrection would signify the single most precious gift given, from God, to humanity. To believe in this theology, is the foundation of Christian faith. In the first epistle of Peter 2: 4-8, we see him elaborate on this theology of Isaiah 28:16, and states:

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed [rejected], the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” (Peter 2: 4-8).

Peter’s theology affirms the prophecy of Christ in Isaiah and encourages believers to live by Christ’s example. Where he refers to believers “as living stones”, he is stating that those who believe in Jesus, will fulfil His heritage and that every believer will be added to the building of His ministry. This building of Christ’s ministry is the spiritual building of the Church, not the physical. Every stone that is added to the *Cornerstone* of Christ is another believer added to His foundation in faith.

When it came to my life in general, the foundation of my faith was unquestionable. But when it came to how I understood and practiced art, I could not seem to identify the *cornerstone* of my practice. I found it increasingly problematic that all aspects of my identity were shrouded in my faith in Jesus Christ, except my identity as an artist. By drawing all these rocks, I realised that it was a fragmented perception of my artistic-self. The repetitive drawings of this fragmentation, were a mantra-like prayer, trying to relocate the source of my artistic foundation. But my act of visual prayer, to a corner of a gallery, was a misplacement of faith. What I was trying to do was find fragments of my faith in an environment that had no identity or faith. By trying to integrate faith into contemporary art, I had literally painted myself into a corner and was forced to deal with the chaos of my own creation.

3.6. Faith in a Faithless space: the praxis of faith in a contemporary sense.

It is at this point that I began to reflect on faith objectively and took myself and my personal beliefs out of the equation. What I was trying to do was find an avenue for Christian faith in contemporary art. However, I found that there was none. After revisiting James Elkins' statement, [referenced in my introduction] I had discovered that the very issues that Elkins highlighted in his conclusion, had surfaced during my faith praxis endeavour. Where he says: "*I have tried to show why committed, engaged, ambitious, informed art does not mix with dedicated, serious, thoughtful, heartfelt religion. Wherever the two meet, one wrecks the other*", I believe he is right (Elkins 2004: 15-16). Because I had experienced the failure that came with trying to resolve these differences in my own practice. However, where Elkins says: "*It is impossible to talk sensibly about religion and at the same time address art in an informed and intelligent manner: but it is also irresponsible not to keep trying.*", I disagree (2004:15-16). If we do as Elkins says and "keep trying", we will repeat, [as I have already experienced] his cycle of futility in contemporary art. However, Elkins exploration deals with historical imperatives and its theoretical constructs. Therefore, his endeavour would be inconclusive, because he is basing his findings on its historical conclusions. And because the idea of faith would be viewed as a Modernist conception and contemporary art thrives on Postmodernism, they could never share the same artistic platform.

Elkins' integration of alternate ideological concepts may not be the answer, however, Jensen's approach to the problem questions the environment in which conceptual art is exhibited. In Jensen's 'The Substance of things seen: *art, faith and the Christian community*', she is more concerned about Christian faith-based art's place in the Church and Christian community than in the contemporary space. Her stance is that because Christian affiliated art has been in decline for enumerable decades, and therefore rendered obsolete as a contemporary concept, that art has missed out on the evolvement of Christian religion. The consequence of this is that not only is it problematic to convey Christian faith as a contemporary concept, but its relevance in the church is questioned too. For instance, because the concept of religion in art is absent, the only kind of relevant art that is available to Christian communities is contemporary art. However, this has proven problematic in the church space (Jensen 2004: 1594-1605). To elaborate on this, Jensen

addresses a few key examples where contemporary artwork exhibited in the church has ended badly. She states:

“Sometimes the battle between church and artist is less about content than about context, or even about timing. For example, in June of 2001, the director of the visual arts program at New York's Cathedral of Saint John the Divine objected to an artist's refusal to remove or alter her installation in the cathedral's baptistry in time for the baptism of the grandson of the bishop. Based on the floor plan of a Buddhist temple, the installation, which consisted of blue tape and vinyl letters, prominently featured Buddhist verses and surrounded the baptismal font. The artist refused either to amend her work or to remove it, creating a controversy over the appropriateness of non-Christian symbols in particularly sacred or sensitive areas of church space. Although it seems the conflict largely emerged out of a mutual misunderstanding between the artist and the church over their original agreement about the installation, important issues were raised and aired, albeit in painful circumstances.; This case was particularly difficult because of the cathedral's general welcome of artworks from different faith traditions and even some that have been enormously controversial, such as the works of Andres Serrano (particularly famous for his photograph *Piss Christ*), which were exhibited in the cathedral that same year.”(2004: 1609-1616).

Where Jensen concedes that the church was open to exhibiting artists' work in their sacred space what neither party considered was that their perspectives may over-step each other's boundaries. Although the church and the respective artists approached their collaboration with optimism, they failed to see the polarising issues that would occur because of individual visions misinformed, [on the basis of difference in ideologies]. Jensen shows that she is aware of this issue, stating:

“One of the obvious issues such cases raise is how a church body fairly and faithfully decides how to welcome art without having to silence its own fears and feelings when the art seems to be contradictory to some of the basic values and traditions of the community itself. Doing this requires a strategy that includes genuine observation and openness to dialogue and education. By "observation" I mean that the religious community involved must actually be willing to look at the work with initial goodwill. (Many of the loudest critics of the "Sensation" show never actually went to see it.) The community must also be open to listening, both to the people who love the work and to those who fear it. This will involve mediation as well as education, so that those who hold different opinions aren't as threatened by or as threatening to one another. By virtue of the looking, listening, and talking, people may arrive at a new place and some common ground.” (2004:1623-1627).

Jensen's antidote to the problem is to find a "common ground", where difference in ideological beliefs can coexist. Her first step toward this resolution is to observe each other's beliefs with an open mind set. "Meditation and education" is key. With a reflexive approach, this can be initiated through dialogue between perspectives. Whether this dialogue is verbal or visual, she does not confirm. But the dialogue would need to generate a sort of conscientious mobility in visual art for it to work. Although I do agree with Jensen's resolution, I do not agree with her method. Where she believes a dialogue needs to be initiated for a common ground to be distinguished, I believe the common ground should be distinguished first, in order for there to be a dialogue. This is where I believe the method of faith comes in. If art can be distinguished as an artist's ideological belief acted out in faith, then a dialogue can be mobilized on the praxis of faith as a common ground.

After reviewing Tillich's dynamics of faith, I realised that when observing his method of faith objectively, that faith could be pervasive in any paradigm of belief, not only in religion. This begged the question whether philosophy could be a secular faith. Tillich reasons that there are similarities between the "*ultimate of the philosophical question and the ultimate of the religious concern*" (1957: 106). When defining philosophy, he theorises that; "*Philosophy, in its genuine meaning, is carried on by people in whom the passion of an ultimate concern is united with a clear and detached observation of the way ultimate reality manifests itself in the processes of the universe. It is the element of ultimate concern behind philosophical ideas which supplies the truth of faith in them. Their vision of the universe and of man's predicament within it unites faith and conceptual work.*" (Tillich 1957: 106).

Basically, what he is saying here is that both religion and philosophy endeavour to encapsulate an ultimate reality. The methods are similarly expressed, but the views in which they surmise their methods are different. The difference is that philosophy conceptualises reality, whereas religion is symbolic when defining reality. Tillich does concede that philosophy can bare a likeness to faith, but only in pursuit of philosophical veracity. What can be deduced from Tillich's summary on philosophy, is that it reasons an existence of the universe (and its inhabitants) from a humanist perspective. Furthermore, the source of belief for philosophy is the philosopher and the method of faith is the philosopher's philosophical theory. This could be interpreted that philosophy deifies humanity. So, if an artist's life is influenced by their belief and their belief stems from a

specified philosophy or philosopher, then that would become a part of their praxis. Significantly, an artist's method of philosophical thinking could filter into their artistic way of thinking, syncing with their creative process.

Ultimately, their artwork may produce their identity through preference of aesthetics, but their philosophy will be precedent conceptually. If this is the case, then there is very little difference between religious faith and philosophical faith. The two embodies the same principle, but by different constructs. Tillich's theory may bare some truth concerning Modern philosophy and preceding philosophies, but when applied to postmodern philosophy, it becomes problematic. Postmodernism does not seek an ultimate reality, it deconstructs it (Bertens 1995: 9). Where modern philosophy deifies humanity, postmodernism usurps them, making conceptual art a god free zone (Griffin 1989: x). Yet postmodernism is still a belief, and its theory a philosophy. If this is the case, then postmodern philosophy is faith in doubt.

The point that I'm trying to make here, is that although art has come a long way from the symbolism of Iconic motifs, spiritual representationalism, religious influence and artistic absolutes, it does not mean that these concepts are outdated and irrelevant today. It does mean, however, that there has been a failure to recognise its potential to evolve. I believe this 'potential to evolve' starts with personal faith. The reason being that faith is not assigned to a historical movement or agenda, it is assigned to the individual. The most probable cause for influence on an individual's faith praxis is their present era. This means that if we observe an artist's artwork according to their faith, we have to observe the entirety of their work in accordance with their immediate era. The gallery may not personify any faith or deity, but it does house variants of artists' respective beliefs. This would be a good starting point to apply the method of faith as an observational tool when analysing the artists' work. Not only would we begin to see the cornerstone of the artists' belief system, but we can observe all the additional building-stones that were added along the way of faith defining belief. However, when I say; "additional building-stones", I'm referring to the social constructs that they are accustomed to, their inherent history, moral views and metaphysical identity. Here we have enough cause for a dialogue and an alternative way of seeing, not only of the artist, but of what the artist has created and why.

From Neil Gaiman's, *American Gods* there is a thought-provoking scene that describes the belief in a god from a god's perspective, it reads:

“Have you thought about what it means to be a god?” asked the man. He had a beard and a baseball cap. “It means you give up your mortal existence to become a meme: something that lives forever in people’s minds, like the tune of a nursery rhyme. It means that everyone gets to re-create you in their own minds. You barely have your own identity any more. Instead, you’re a thousand aspects of what people need you to be. And everyone wants something different from you. Nothing is fixed, nothing is stable.” (2001: 457).

This quote alone, put my whole conception of faith as a practice in the gallery space into context. Through Gaiman’s character, again we see the mind as the place where faith is conceived. Where an individual wrestles with the persona of their god, what they discover of themselves and their source of belief is relative to their identity. This is how a personal faith in a god develops. But because there are many notions of different individual’s personal god’s, there is no “fixed” idea of who or what a god is. This is what evolved my idea of my rocks and their fractured state. It had progressed from existential doubt to apocalyptic revelation. In the contemporary sense of art, there are no fixed ideas of humanity and our reality, and there are no fixed belief or source of beliefs, only personal revelations about the self. This is what I believe is displayed in contemporary exhibition spaces. And this is what I began to reason through the images of my rocks. And with that, my existential struggle with doubt had come to a turning point in my praxis. I was less inclined to wrestle with doubt and more inclined to wrestle with faith. Which lead me to a new phase of my artistic grapple. Where I was no longer trying to work out my doubt in my artwork, but rather work out my faith. This incited a return to my printmaking, where I worked out the substance of my faith through a new series of mezzotints.

3.7. Working out salvation with fear and trembling: Printmaking, faith and its process:

To work on a mezzotint, is to work blind. I can prepare myself for the process by drawing a few sketches of what I would hope to print or exercising the reductive technique of charcoal negative drawing. But neither of these processes prepares me for the undiscernible outcome of a mezzotint. The two popular methods used to create a mezzotint is the mezzotint rocker method and the aquatint method. For my prints I used a mezzotint rocker. Unlike the aquatint method, creating a mezzotint with a mezzotint rocker is more labour intensive. It relies on the force, rapid movement and technique of the printmakers use of a mezzotint rocker. The rocker itself is a

unique tool to familiarise oneself with. It is a variation of tools fused as one. It resembles the form of a chisel but graces the mobility of a rocking chair. From the back of the tool, its fine-toothed edge is barely visible when viewed from the smooth surface but when viewed from the opposite side, its fine-toothed edges expands into vertical ridges along the spatula-shaped head.

The ridges is the tooth behind the bite when rocking the mezzotint rocker onto the plate. And the rocking pressure applied by the printmaker's rolling wrist is what causes the bite to impress on the plate. The force needed to apply the bite is reliant on the printmaker's discipline and rocking motion to create a stipple engraving. With a consistent rocking motion, momentum is garnered, releasing the force of the printmaker's patterned movement across the plate (Chamberlain 1972: 138). Like a gentle force of a low tidal wave dragging sand and stones back-and-forth on an ocean bed, so does the printmaker rock their tool back and forth on the plate. With time and patience, the once smooth and shiny surface of the copper/bass/zinc plate becomes eroded by the relentless rocking, leaving its surface like smooth concrete to the touch (Fig. 32).

At this point, the plate is imageless. If the burred surface was to be inked out, it would print a sheen of black. But to create an image out of the darkness, an image must be scraped and burnished into the engraved surface. This is when the working blind phase begins. The rocked-out plate's surface is a rare surface to work an image out of, because the artist does not simply draw into the mezzotint surface, but rather abrades the surface into a printable image (Chamberlain 1972: 139). With a mezzotint, I cannot think in terms of line and form, but rather in texture and tone. How this is done depends on the printmaking tools I decide to use. For my plates I used a scraper and a burnisher. Between these two tools I scraped at areas of the plate I wanted the lightest tones to reside and burnished where I wanted the illusion of light to be less evident. The key to this method of image-making is reductive drawing, and to reduce an image out of a mezzotint is to think in terms of light and dark; Chiaroscuro. It is not so much about producing the image you have in mind to print, but it is more about where you think the light might be present in the image. Without light, we cannot see. And this is why I believe that in Genesis 1: 3 God created light first. It was so that He could see what He was working with; formless matter and voids of space.

In my religion, this is how I experienced faith. I believed in what I could not see. But in order for me to see what I believed in, I had to put my faith into practice. I had to act on it. And action

produces the “substance of faith” (Hebrews 11:1). This is what the mezzotint etched surface embodied. It is the belief before the faith, the foundation before the construction and the black print before the burnished image.

The contact between the tools used and the etched plate is a very intimate and taxing process. When a mezzotint rocker is rocked into a metal plate [e.g. zinc, copper or brass], it is not only the plate that gets worn down by the rocking process, but the rocker also goes through a series of corrosion. Therefore, the intimacy between the rocker and the plate engenders a give and take relationship. When the rocker enforces its mark into the surface of the plate, it disrupts the harmony of its untouched surface. It does not merely leave a stippled mark, but it takes away from the plates original form. The rockers abrasive interaction with the plate not only mars its surface but alters its image.

In return, the more the mezzotint rocker oscillates into the plate, the blunter it becomes. Its fine sharp ridges begins to lose its edge and has less of an impact on the plates surface. When this happens, the rocking process must stop for a period, for tool sharpening. But in my case, this part of the printmaking process is not so simple. In order for a mezzotint rocker to be sharpened it needs a mezzotint pole rocker jig. This tool is specifically crafted for an even angled and curvature sharpening process. However, I did not have this tool on hand, and it is not a popular product to find at local stores. So, I opted for a less reliable sharpening technique, which involved me sharpening the mezzotint rocker without the assistance of a jig. This made the sharpening process a lot harder to do and left me with more factors to consider whilst sharpening the tool manually. There was no pole to maintain balance and secure an even angle. And there was no jig to regulate a stable pressure. I had to execute an angled balance with the flex of my wrist and sustain an even pressure with muscle and concentration.

Sharpening a mezzotint rocker without a jig means a longer sharpening process. Including my few failed attempts to sharpen by hand, this took me a few weeks to get right. The first few tries were fruitless. I would hold the rocker at a desirable angle and with a circular motion, grind it on a wet stone coated with 3 in 1 oil. But after two or three minutes the constant circular motion and the angling of my wrist would tire. And the maintenance of an even pressure was difficult to sustain. Since my right arm and hand could only achieve my desired pace, balance, angle and pressure for less than five minutes, to solve my dilemma, I decided to administer patience. This

meant, I would sharpen the mezzotint rocker for three minutes daily until I achieved a sharp enough edge. However, this method took time.

To make up for lost time I would aquatint some of my plates with fixative spray and place it into an acid bath to etch into its surface. This method was also effective in creating a solid black print, but it was less arduous in labour and more time consuming in method. For the [fixative] aquatint method I would first ‘stop-out’ my plate with a varnish strong enough to withstand the chemical reaction of the acid from the acid bath. To ‘stop-out’ is to isolate certain areas of the plate that you do not want to be bitten into when placed in the acid bath. For my plates I used Shellac²¹. And once I had applied the varnish and it had dried, I then moved onto the second phase of the process, which was the degreasing phase. Here, I used a combination of white vinegar and calcium carbonate, to combat the undetectable residue of grease on the plate. If the plate had traces of etching ink from the previous print, then I would degrease more than once, and increase my degreasing ingredients. Once I am satisfied that my plate is greaseless, I then carefully dry it with a clean paper towel, cautious not to touch the surface of the plate with my hands. Once the plate is degreased, it is important to keep it that way. It is only once it has gone through the acid bath process that I can touch the surface again. Such precautions are only made to prevent any fatty residue from prohibiting an even bite into the prepared areas of the plate when exposed to the acid. But before the etching process can begin, a third phase is implemented by prepping the surface for the etch. For my third process, my aquatint, in the form of fixative spray, was applied. In the palm of my hand, I held the plate at a moderate distance of 50cm and sprayed the fixative at an even pace. After a resting period of ten seconds, the method was repeated three to four times. Once I was satisfied with my application, I would begin my final phase of the etching process and lower my plate into the acid bath for a duration of fifteen minutes. When all was done, I would rinse my plate of the acid with cold running water and remove the Shellac with methylated spirits.

At the end of the process, like the mezzotint rocker method, I am left with a solid etched surface that can produce a single black print. Though the two methods produce the same outcome, their process articulates two different dialogues. For instance, what is witnessed between the mezzotint

²¹ Shellac is a natural resin secreted by lac beetles that takes on the form of amber flakes. These insects are primarily found on trees in India and Thailand” (Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2013. Sv. ‘Shellac’).

rocker and the plates interaction with each other, is a sort of wrestling match; a battle between wills. When the rocker is rocked into the plate, it must be done with force and vigour in order for a mark to be made. The harder the force, the deeper the engraved impression is made in the plate. And for the plate to be completely transformed into a mezzotint, this forceful action must be repeated until a burr is created to my satisfaction. The force is necessary, because the plate is a force on its own. Whether it be brass, copper or zinc, all these plates have different levels of strength and malleability that is unique to its metal compound. However, the only way to have a transformative effect on the plates is to counter their unique strengths with something stronger. The mezzotint rocker is made of thick high carbon tool steel; a metal much stronger than the variety of metal plates used for intaglio (Chamberlain 1972: 138). And with the added influence of the artists rocking of the tool, the plate is put under a surmountable pressure to change.

As for the aquatint method, no act of force was needed, but continuous preparation. This process thrived on diligence and mindfulness. Diligence; because the process is conducted in an orderly fashion. Each step that is made during the etching process must be done carefully. And if one of these steps are skipped or done out of order, then the whole process is ruined and must begin all over again. Which is why mindfulness is a necessity. Because every step that is made is preparation for the next step. And if each step is executed proficiently, it makes for a stronger foundation for the next step to be achieved. But no plate is the same. Each one of my plates have a history of their own. Following the *Life Source One* plate, I have created a series of plates, that embodies the elements of Genesis chapter one. Each one of these plates not only personifies the different elements of this scripture, but also personifies the different aspects of my faith. As I worked out each element in each plate, I grappled with the different aspects of my personal faith. Each plate was named after the evolution of certain elements of the scripture, personifying the degrees of my faith and its evolutionary process post doubt. But for length of this thesis I am not going to go through all of my plates evolution, but rather use only one of my plates as an example to expound on how its materiality issued the transfiguration of my faith.

Unlike the *Life Source One* plate, my second plate, which I have named 'Water', is larger in scale and made of copper not brass, and it is part mezzotint and part dry point (Fig. 33). This plate

exhibits the many forms that the water of Genesis 1 vs 6-7 undergoes²². It not only depicts the literal sense of the verse, but how the verse and its meaning begins to evolve from the literal, through the allegorical and into the personal. The mezzotint sections of the plate depicts the allegorical, while the dry point sections evokes the literal waters. As the plate generates new images of the verse, it begins to transpire the personal. This is where I respond to the verse as an artist and a Christian; and where I begin to grapple with my philosophy of doubt and theory of faith. With each new image I produce of the second plate, the mezzotint becomes more prominent than the previous print. This was not premeditated but felt like the organic thing to do. The literal depiction of the waves spoke of the earthly waters; the waters that quenches the earth and destroys it. By conveying this water in dry point I am directly scratching my image into the plate with the tip of the scraper. When I apply my mark, I can see what it is doing to the plate and I can gauge how this mark will translate as a print. With dry point I have more control of the outcome. Unlike a mezzotint, it practices positive drawing. It is a very straight forward process. The mark you make as a dry point, is the mark you will receive as a print. But mezzotint is not so straight forward. It is the process of uncertainty.

When I begin to scrape into the burred surface, there is no telling how deep I can go to create a specific tone, I have to discern this part on my own. If the surface has been previously inked, and its residue remains embedded in the mezzotint areas of the previous print, this can help my ability to discern better. But generally, if I have never worked on the plate before, I am working blind. With each time I rock out or aquatint a new burred surface, the plates whole structure changes a little more from what it once was. And as I work into the new blank surface, I have to rediscover its structure all over again. I have to be sensitive to its change and keep that in mind as I burnish a new image into it. I also need to be mindful, that even this new image that I am eroding into the plate will cause a new shift in its form. And that this shift will be felt as I begin to discern my way through the next image I plan to scrape away (Fig.34).

As I continue to abrade my meditations of the scriptures into the surface, I do it in good faith. I know what I am doing when I use the scraper and I know what I'm doing when I use the burnisher. When I apply the scraper to the brass/copper/zinc plate, I know what image I am going to create,

²² "And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so."

I know with what point of the scraper I need to use to lay down its substructure before toning. I know when pressure needs to be applied at certain sections of the image with the burnisher. But I have no idea how this image will print. I create it anyway and anticipate its outcome during the printing process. When I finally do print the image, I finally get to see what I had been working so hard towards. I finally get to see what I was creating in the dark. And from that seeing, I learn from the print. I learn where I went wrong [and right] during the image making process. And I get insight as to what needs to take shape in the next image. And so, even though all these independent acts of printmaking build up to the final print, I am really having a dialogue with myself throughout the printmaking process. And with every image that I engrave over with the rocker, I am debating this verse and how it substantiates my faith. I am seeing what I can do and what I can't do and where the tools and materials limit me.

I can see this by how the image prints out. If I have over inked the plate and under-wiped it, I will know this because my print will have blotches of shiny ink on the paper and some of the marks that I have made in the plate will be lost in the blotches of ink. If I have over-wiped my plate, some areas of the image will not show all the marks and fine detail. And if I ink out and wipe down my plate just right, I can see all of the work show through in the print. And from there, I can gauge whether what I am doing during the preparation of the plate or the image making of the print is successful or not. If it is not, then I know where to correct my process for the next image. If it is, then I know how to move forward with the next phase of prints.

Though I allude this process to the act of faith, the personal insight that this process illuminates for me, is the precept in which I act my faith on spiritually. This precept comes from Philippians 2 vs 12 where Paul addresses the church of Philistia in a letter, "*Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*". The line "*...to work out salvation with fear and trembling*", is a very controversial sentence. The reason being, that salvation is a gift of God in the form of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Whether humanity chooses to receive it or not, it has been made available. And what has been made available through the salvation of Jesus Christ is a reconnection with God. The intimate relationship with God that was lost to humanity through Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was restored through the sacrificial life of Christ. And more than once this is prophesied in the Old Testament and professed in the New as freely given and the

greatest gift to receive from God. But if this gift is a blessing and good for the one receiving it, then why would Paul instruct a church of believers to work out this good gift with fear and trembling? I believe it is because of the ever-encroaching element of doubt that threatens the element of faith. Because, when salvation is received, it is received by faith and not by sight.

What a person experiences in life and witnesses visually can either encourage doubt or faith. But as a Christian, life experiences is not enough for me to doubt the origin of my faith. Because if I do not have faith in what I believe in, I would never act on what I believe in. And if I never act on what I believe in, I will never get to witness the substance of my faith. To elaborate on what I mean by the “substance of my faith”, the next two verses of Hebrews 11: 1-3 reaffirms the first verse, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...*” By saying, “*For by the elders have obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*”. By these two verses, Paul is shedding light on two things; where faith comes from and how it works. In the case of where faith comes from, he addresses the source of it, the first act of faith, being God’s creation of the worlds [or Universe]. And it is by this first act of faith, that a chain reaction begins.

Where light is created, a rotation of greater and lesser light in the form of the Sun, Moon and the stars begins its orbit (Genesis 1: 14-19). Where the earth is called out of the waters, agriculture begins to germinate, and the cycle of seasons begin (Genesis 1: 9-13). Where birds of the sky and fish of the sea are called into existence and the beasts of the earth are called out of the earth, the cycle of life begins to cultivate (Genesis 1: 20-25). And when man/woman are formed from the dirt, the earth begins to populate (Genesis 1: 26-28). This is the substance of God’s faith in His creative act; life in abundance. And when death occurs, the substance returns to its birthplace, to the earth, and the cycle begins all over again. It is in constant transit; the life force of God’s creative act. Once it begins, it never ends. Which leads me to the prophecy of Isaiah 55: 11, “*So shall my word be that goeth forth from my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*”.

As someone that believes that I am made in the image of God, and that His image may not necessarily be physical, but metaphysical and empirical, this means that it is inherent in me to not only abide by faith, but to create by faith. However, God is my image perfected and He is not

susceptible to doubt like I am. And that is why when He acts in faith it is faith personified. Therefore, when God created salvation through the sacrifice of His Son for the redemption of His creation, it was done by the perfection of faith. So, as a Christian, if I am to doubt everything that God stands for and doubt His gift of salvation, then I cause destruction to the reason of my existence and forfeit my gift of life in abundance. And then I become the destruction of the image of my Maker, and that destruction will begin to transpire through my acts of doubt. This is why Paul instructs the Church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, because it is in human nature to doubt. And the only way to combat doubt is to increase faith.

Whenever I worked into the blank canvas of a newly burred plate, I worked without foresight. I could draw an outline with pencil as a guideline to help me navigate the burred surface better with my tools, but it will not help me discern how deep I should work into the surface or which areas needs to be treated with sensitivity. This kind of insight only comes with experience. It comes with knowing the individual plates and knowing how each plate reacts to the tools under my influence. This is inevitably where the foresight begins; the act itself. When I begin to create my image in the plate, I cannot tell right away whether it is working or whether I am on the right track. Because in the begin process of burnishing, I am forging my image out of what I know to work; scraping and burnishing.

In the beginning, my image is unrecognisable. It is nothing but scrapes and scuffs at the rough surface. But I know that if I continue to scrape and abrade at the surface, that eventually a semblance of what I have envisioned for the plate will begin to emerge. And when the image begins to take recognisable shape, this is where I become cautious. Because now that I am able to vaguely see what I once could only envision, I need to determine how to emphasis its features. This part is not easy, because, unlike dry point, I cannot simply draw in the details needed to captivate the totality of the image. I can only create these details through tonality. Here I begin to think in terms of light. I ask myself, if this image was outside, at what point of day would I see it? And where would my image be illuminated by this light? Whatever I conclude with, I apply to my image. But if I scrape too much in certain areas, I may lose important details. And if I do not burnish hard enough in other areas, it may still be too porose and hold more ink than I would hoped for, leaving it dark and undefined.

My solution to this problem is to be methodical about how I use my tools. At the start of creating the image, I scrape most of my image out of the plate. But as I near to the end of its construction, I scrape less and burnish more. And when I feel it is ready, I do test prints to see how much work still needs to be done. And if more work needs to be done, I tailor my plate according to the results of the test print. I repeat this process until a test print starts to look like a final print. And then from there, I begin to work on perfecting my inking process [for the specific plate that I am working on] until I produce that one perfect print (Fig. 35).

Much like my printmaking process, my faith is a work in progress. With each new print I produce, I learn from its process. I learn from its mistakes and apply what I have learnt to the next print. And with each new print I produce, my technique and printmaking discernment improves. Much like faith, the more I practice [or act on] my belief in God, the less inclined I am to doubt. As I work out my salvation with fear and trembling, I rock out the imperfections of my plate. As my worldly experience's wrestles with the Word of God, I scrape away and burnish at the burred plate and I do this until something becomes visible. And like my burnishing process, when I begin to see the substance of my faith, the uncertainty starts to dissipate. I gain foresight and I secure understanding about the process and how to continue. But it takes work. It takes discipline and courage to pursue in faith as much as it does to work out a new print. Failure and mistakes are part of the process, just as much as doubt is part of the process of faith. But If I end at failure or give up at my mistakes, then the print will never develop. Much like, if I chose to doubt, I would never see the substance of my faith. This is how I relate my printmaking process to my faith and this is why I view my practice, as an artist, as a praxis in faith.



Figure 25. Carmen Maria Titus, Close ups of brass plate at different burnished phases of mezzotint process, *Life Source One*. 2015.



Figure 26. Carmen Maria Titus, Mezzotint prints, *Life Source One*. 2015. Mezzotint in black etching ink on Rosapina, Fabriano , 15 x 15 cm per print.



Figure 27. Carmen Maria Titus, First stage of rock drawing development, *Untitled*. 2015. Pelt pen and white pencil on cardboard, 21 x 29.7 cm.

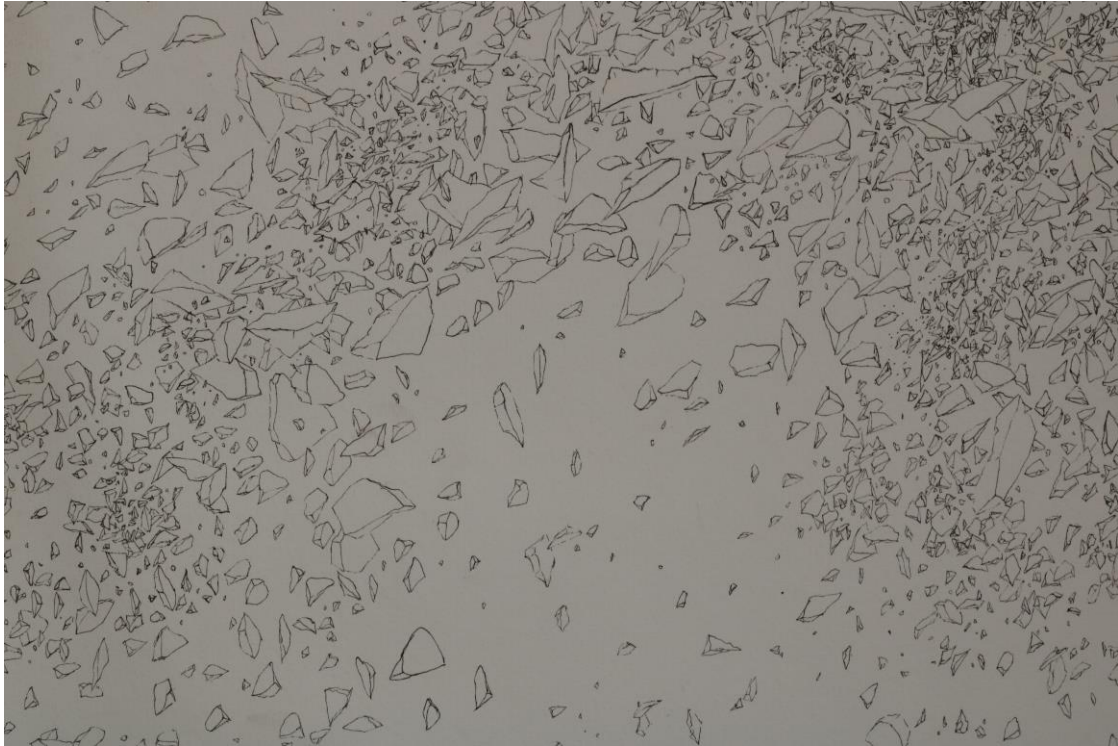


Figure 28. Carmen Maria Titus Process drawings, *Faith, doubt and space series*. 2017. Felt pen on Fabriano. 59.4 x 76.6 cm.

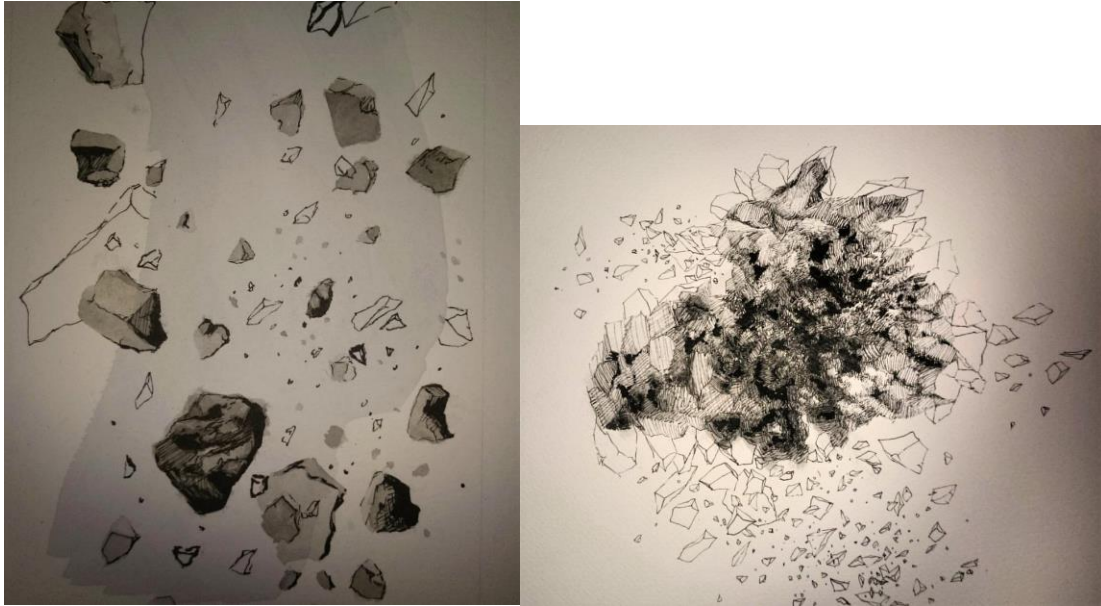


Figure 29. Carmen Maria Titus, Experimentations with rock drawings, *Untitled*. 2017. Felt pen, black ink and watercolour.



Figure 30. Carmen Maria Titus, Corner process drawing at GUS, Threshold, *Take me to the Rock that is higher than I*. 2017. Felt Pen and black ink on wall.



Figure 31. Exterior view of the Gallery. n.d. Stellenbosch. (Murray 2018).

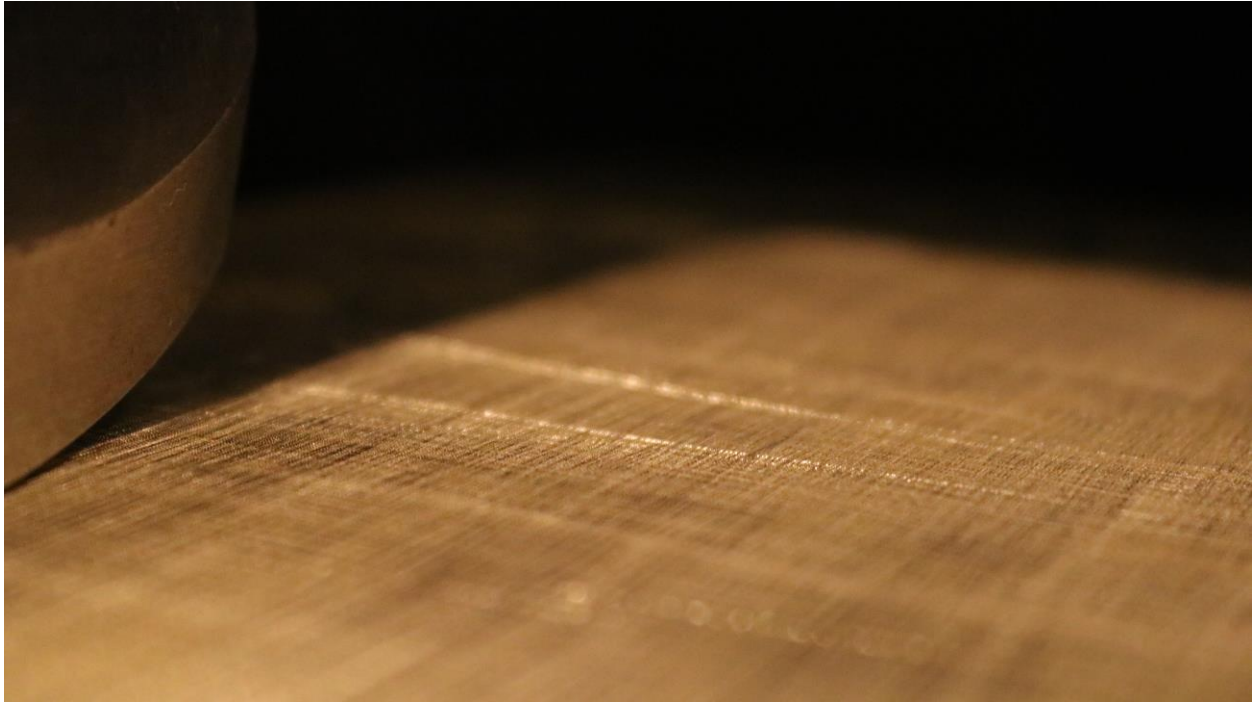


Figure 32. Carmen Maria Titus, The mezzotint rocker and the surface of one of my plates, *Untitled*. 2019. Photograph.

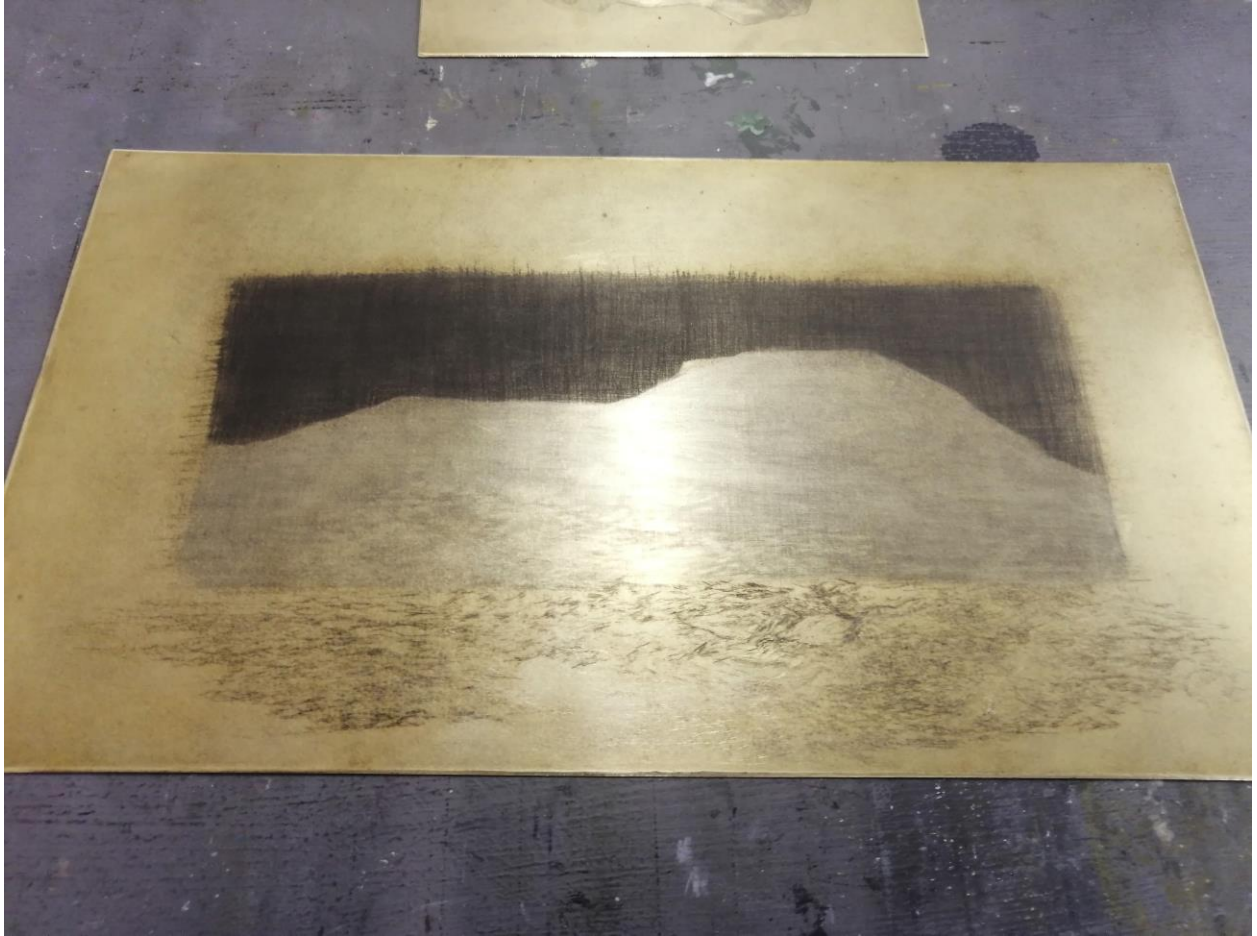


Figure 33. Carmen Maria Titus, first phase of the *Water* series ready for print, *Water*. 2019. Brass plate, 22 x 39 cm.



Figure 34. Carmen Maria Titus, second phase of *Water* series; layered with a fixative aquatint and preserved dry point, *Water*. 2019. Brass plate, 22 x 39cm.

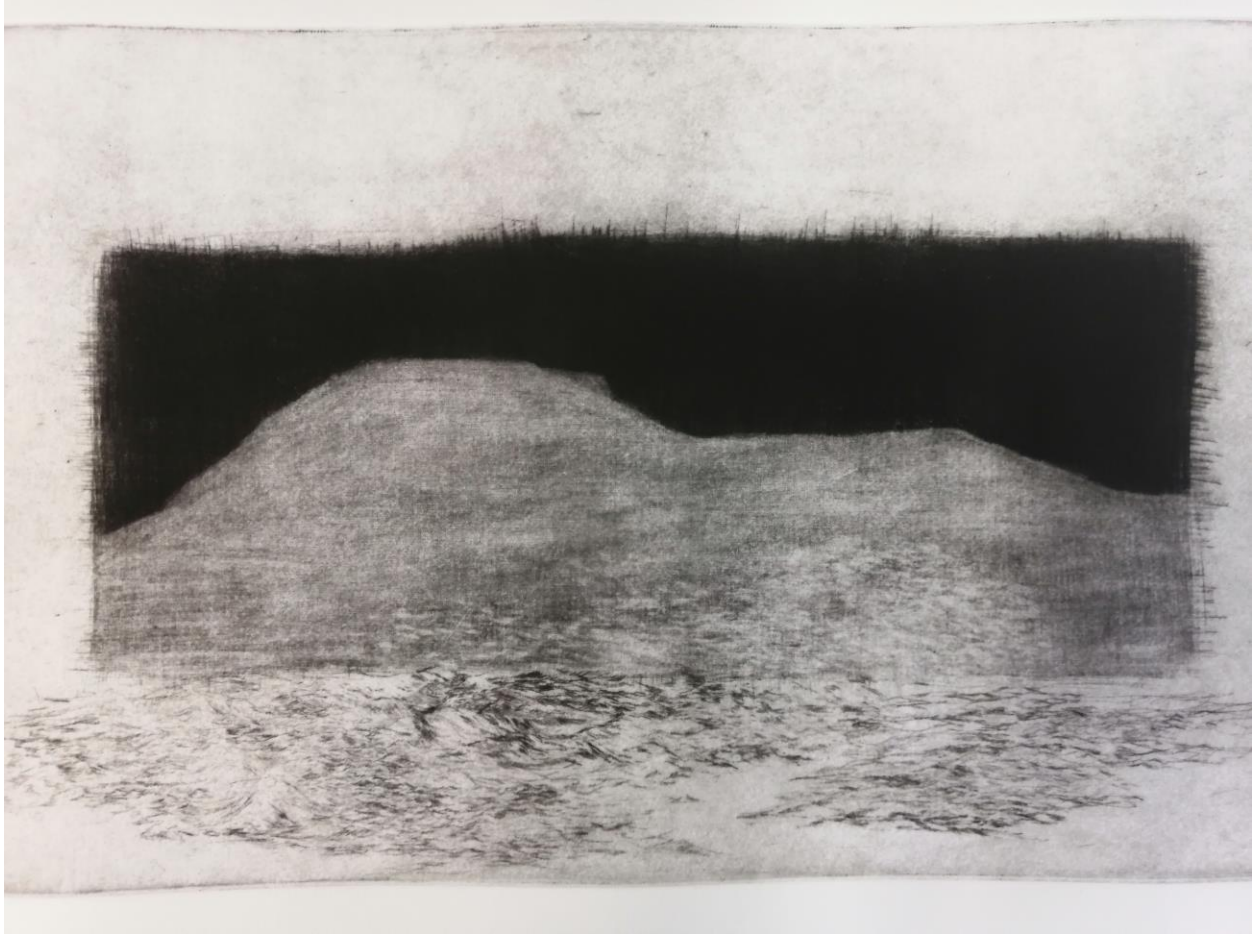


Figure 35. Carmen Maria Titus, phase one print, *Water*. 2019. Mezzotint and dry point in black etching ink, on Zerkall, 38 x 53cm.

Conclusion

As I reflect on what I have written and why I have pursued this notion of faith being pervasive in an artist's praxis, I now realise that this idea may be a lot more complex than anticipated. Although chapter one was simple enough and a fairly one-sided analysis of faith, when observing artworks on the principles of Tillich's faith, its simplicity fragmented into layers. More than any of these chapters, these layers were most evident in my third chapter. However, I believe I have only scratched the surface of this idea, as this dissertation was conceived as an introduction to the idea. After reviewing my own artwork and the experiential processes behind these works, I realised that the phenomenological side could have been explored more. But for the purpose of focusing on the conception of the idea and how I reasoned it through my artwork, the phenomenal aspect had to be restrained.

As I delved deeper into the experiential aspect of my praxis, I could see how this study could be assigned to Modernism or featured as Sublime. But my argument against this is what I clearly state in chapter 3; that faith as an artistic praxis should be read within the context of its era. Because, although the artist is personifying their belief in their artwork, their identity is very much shaped and structured according to their social construct, and that must be observed within the artist's present environment. In addition, for me to observe my faith-based praxis according to former movements would do injustice to my contemporary experiences. Therefore, I must concede that faith is in constant development and no one individual's faith development would be processed the same way. This is because the development is heavily dependent on the individual's immediate experiences and these experiences stay with them throughout the time of their lifespan.

Therefore, with every new generation that an individual develops personal faith, the concept of faith itself adapts to the individual's generation. If this is the case, then the concept of faith as an artistic praxis will always be relevant. However, what would faith as an artistic praxis be relevant for? And, for that matter, would this change the way art is perceived and practiced? To answer the first question, I believe it is for artists who want to explore their religion or defining-belief as

a contemporary subject. And the answer to question two can only be answered if faith as an artistic praxis produced a following.

On the topic of my third chapter, I have allowed myself to be subjective while self-examining my artwork. Yet instead of examining my artwork as finished projects, I decided to focus on the motions that lead up to its end. Because at the crux of my praxis, what I endeavour to understand is why we make the things that we make as artists. As a Christian, to explore this question on the dominance of Postmodern theory is not enough. For someone that is defined by believing in something and explores their artistic intuition from a place of ideological belief, they will struggle to reason their praxis on the precepts of Postmodernism. Its result only engenders doubt. For that reason, there needs to be more than one theoretical incentive when studying art contemporarily.

I have ended chapter three on a vague note, because the prospect of faith as an artistic praxis is still uncertain. Since I have only scratched the surface of this subject, there is still more to explore. And although this thesis has solely focused on the development of Christian faith in art, it would be beneficial to see how the praxis of artistic faith would be interpreted in other religions and belief systems. There is also the phenomenological aspect of the unconscious activity during the processes of personal faith, where the human soul is still shrouded in mystery and its spiritual consequences questionable during the motions of art production. These are features that I have not touched on but are potential studies on the premise of faith as a praxis. There are probably more subjects on the topic to investigate, but I have not yet realised it.

In conclusion, my aim was to introduce the idea that faith can be a form of artistic praxis. I had set out to introduce a method of faith that could potentially be conducive to any form of religion or defining-belief, to convey that faith is naturally a human disposition, rather than a religious endeavour. I defined this idea with the intention to use it as a possible way of viewing visual art. I exercised this method when analysing artworks and specified artists as an example of how faith could be perceived in art. I also extended the method of faith in my own observational praxis. My self-evaluated praxis and its artwork was extensive on the subject and contributed evidential issues that arose during my undertaking. I have addressed these issues; Postmodernism philosophy as a secular belief to religious belief and briefly detailed how faith can be interpreted as a Modernist attitude. But at the core of it all, I believe I have defined my topic and executed

my objective. I have introduced faith as an artistic praxis and given examples of how it could work and where it couldn't. I have given examples of how faith has potentially evolved in art. I kept my third chapter subjective, to elaborate on how faith can be an artistic endeavour. What I have gathered from my findings, is that, although this is only an introduction, there is still potential to explore this topic on more isolated contemporary subjects, and hopefully expound on the potential of faith as an artistic praxis.

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