

Hand Made: Going Deeper on your Journey with God

Week 1: The Hand Made Principle

“We are God’s handiwork” Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

“We are God’s workmanship” (KJV, ESV)

“We are God’s masterpiece” (NLT)

The Greek word is “poiema”, from which we get “poem”

“Then the Lord formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Gen 2:7)

I invite you to stay, for a time, with this short text, this old, old story about God forming a human being from clay and breathing into their nostrils the breath of life.

It is a hand-made process. Each one made is unique. If anyone were to do this over and over again, no matter how skilled they were, no two figures would be exactly the same.

It is a creative process. The craftsman uses his imagination to picture in his mind’s eye what he wants the figure to look like, then works to transfer that idea to the clay in his hands. The work of his hands expresses his will, his creativity.

It is work done with care, as all craft is, with absolute attention. The details matter. The realising of the craftsman’s vision for that object matters, down to the smallest detail.

It is a holistic process. The craftsman making the clay figure is not part of a production line. He does not make the head and then hand the figure to another who makes the body or the feet. He is looking on the whole entity as he makes it, the physical body, the personality, the intellect, the emotions.

It is an intimate process. The created being’s first breath comes from the very breath of the creator. The first thing he or she feels as they come to consciousness is the soft breath of the creator on their face.

This is the story which the writer of Genesis chose to write down for future generations about God, about how we came to be.

Stay with any part of this which feels like it might be speaking to you. Noticing what you might see in your mind’s eye, where your imagination might be taking you. What are you feeling? What are you noticing? How does this story reflect on God? And on us? How does this story reflect on God looking at us?



Revelation

by Ann Lewin

God's work of art.
That's me?
Then Beauty must lie
In the eye of the
Beholder.

I feel more like
One of those statues
Michelangelo left
Half emerging
From the marble block;
Full of potential,
On the verge of life,
But prisoned still
By circumstance and
Fear.

Yet part of me is free —
And you are still creating,
Bringing to life
The promise that is there.

Sometimes by
Hammer blows
Which jar my being,
Sometimes by
Tender strokes half felt
Which waken me to
Life.

Go on, Lord.
Love me into wholeness.
Set me free
To share with you
In your creative joy;
To laugh with you
At your delight
In me,
Your work of art.

from Ann Lewin, *Candles and Kingfishers*, Foundery Press, 1997.



A few further thoughts...

“Whenever you encounter a hand-crafted object, you are meeting something that is by definition unique, with its own fingerprint of quirks and imperfections. That’s because every such item... bears the indexical residue of a particular moment in time, when a human being put something into the world that didn’t exist before and couldn’t exist anywhere else. To hold it in your hands is to converse with its maker, who — moments, months, maybe centuries earlier — wove, moulded or carved those same surfaces.”

James Fox, *Craftland*, Bodley Head, 2025

“Technique has a bad name; it can seem soulless. That’s not how people whose hands become highly trained view technique. For them, technique will be intimately linked to expression.”

Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, Penguin Books, 2009

Think of yourself for a moment. There is no one on this earth who is like you. This may be just as well, but it is true. You may have an identical twin who was removed at birth for all you know, but there is not, and cannot ever have been, nor will there ever be, a person who is exactly like you. Even if someone has exactly the same genes and chromosomes, the environment in which he or she grew up will have been different and so he will have become a different person. It is not possible for someone else to have the same loves and hates and lusts and fears and anxieties and hopes and desires as you yourself have. You are unique, you are yourself and there never has been, or can be, someone who is just like you, or who fills your place in the world. And if religion is, as it claims to be, a personal relationship with God, your relationship with God will be something unique to yourself and him. You can listen to preachers preaching, you can read about religion — and probably ought to do so because we can learn from each other’s experience — but in the last resort your religion and your prayer is something of your own self.

from Gonville French-Beytagh, *Encountering Light*, Fontana, 1975