

Why would a Christian write poetry?

I want to read you a short passage written by a friend of mine who is a Christian and a poet. He is co-pastor of the *Sanctuary* in Austin, TX. On the back cover of a book of poetry he, another friend of ours, and I published, Ragan Courtney wrote:

“I believe the only way a theologian can communicate sustaining and reviving thoughts to a hungry world of spiritually malnourished people is through the language of poetry. It is the language of the ancient prophets. It is the language of the psalmist. It is the language of five books in the Bible. Jesus himself often spoke in poetic images in most of his parables. His stories were full of metaphors and similes—the language of poetry. The language that we must speak must be reclaimed by those who long to be eloquent. It is our ‘mother tongue’ that has been spoken since the garden; it is the beautiful language of poetry. There is no other way by which we can talk of the lofty and holy things of God.”

I believe that poetry is the art of paying attention: paying attention to the physical world around us *and* to the spiritual world around us. It is the work of the poet/prophet to speak the truth of the spiritual world into the life of the physical world. For Christians, prayer is a conversation. We talk to God and, in fully orbbed and proper prayer, we then “listen” to God. Poetry is merely reporting what we hear. For Christians, a life of obedience to the teachings of Jesus is seeing Jesus in each face, each issue, and each situation. Poetry is merely reporting what we see. I say, “merely reporting what we hear” and “merely reporting what we see,” but the “merely” part, is the part we play as poets. What we see and hear is the work of the person we refer to as God in the person of the “Holy Spirit.”

For me, poetry is a heightened or deepened level of prayer.

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