

[The following article/sermon was published in an unnamed Springfield newspaper on a Monday morning in winter, 1908-1909. The four newspaper clippings are pasted side by side in a scrapbook organized by VL's aunt, Frances Frazee Hamilton, the younger sister of VL's mother Catharine. "Aunt Fannie" (Mrs. Lucius O. Hamilton) lived in Indianapolis (2011 North Alabama) in her later years. Her two VL scrapbooks are now housed in the Sangamon Valley Collection, the rare books and manuscripts division of Springfield's Lincoln Library (city). The First Christian Church in Springfield was the Lindsay family church.

"The Necessity of Reverence" was the original title, but VL delivered the sermon at New York City's Rutgers Presbyterian Church on Sunday evening (April 12, 1908), under the title "The Holiness of Beauty." Biographer Eleanor Ruggles had access to this sermon, either from a manuscript or from a newspaper clipping (see *The West-Going Heart: A Life of Vachel Lindsay*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1959, pp. 142-143. Also see VL's letter to Richard Watson Gilder, in *The Letters of Vachel Lindsay*, ed. Marc Chénétier. New York: Burt Franklin & Co., 1979). I have corrected several obvious typos. Dennis Camp, ed.]

THE NECESSITY OF REVERENCE

AN ABLE DISCOURSE BY
NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY.

**Delivered to the Congregation of the First Christian
Church at Regular Sunday Morning Services Yesterday.**

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, son of Dr. and Mrs. V.T. Lindsay of South Fifth street, delivered an address to the congregation of the First Christian church yesterday morning, his able discourse bearing upon the necessity of reverence. His texts are the first chapter of Genesis, the first chapter of Revelation and Peter's confession in Matthew 16.

The Address.

Mr. Lindsay's address follows:

"I must speak as an artist. Art is not the most necessary thing in the world. It is never useful, in the American sense. It is often dangerous to the soul, like any other pleasure. But the time has come when we must understand it in a religious way. We must know how much and how little it has to do with worship.

"Art has been defined as the expression of one's pleasure in labor. No great work of art was ever produced without an exquisite pleasure on the part of the artist. No matter how desperate, hungry, envious, conscience-stricken or persecuted, his work was his consolation. A skilled critic can tell at once where the artist ceased to enjoy, and that part of the work is condemned. [Note 1]

Reverence for Beauty.

"It is natural to take pleasure in making or seeing beauty. This pleasure has destroyed many nations, because they did not mingle reverence with their pleasure. The necessity for reverence is paramount.

"In Genesis we read how God made the heavens and the earth, and man. We have evidence of His pleasure in His work wherever we see beauty. We must revere this beauty. We must revere the God behind it more.

"Men and animals have a great unending pleasure in the sun, without seeing the finger-mark of God upon it. But he who does not give thanks for the sun is in peril.

"It is right to enjoy the blue sky by day and the evening stars. But many crimes have been done under the stars by those that love them. If we revere the August Presence behind them we may be more constrained from evil.

A Modern Passion.

"All men love the grass and the trees. It is a modern passion, they say, this hunger for landscape. Yet it is most real. The youngest child loves the woods, the oldest man looks out with an uplifting heart upon field and highway. Yet with all this we may be quarrelsome, cold-hearted, revengeful, unkind, bitter of tongue, while our eyes luxuriantly rejoice. An impressionist may be able to paint blazing sunlight, yet be a thief. He does not of necessity fear God. But we can find God in the landscape if we will. Sidney Lanier found God revealed in the marshes of Glynn:

"As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery sod
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God.
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space twixt the marsh and the skies.
By so many roots as the marsh grass sends to the sod

I will heartily lay me ahold of the greatness of God.
 Oh, like to the greatness of God is the Greatness within
 The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.” [Note 2]

Man a Secondary Creator.

“Man is a secondary creator. The most savage man makes his pottery splendid with decorative designs. Great architectures, great parks, great rituals testify to man’s passion for design. The wisest capitols of the world, the most august cathedrals are eye-filling glories. But to feast the eye on these, as one would on meat or fruit, or flowers, without a proper grace before meat, without a contrite heart, is to be destroyed. We are dead already.

History of Art.

“In the history of art man begins with decorative design and continues with it. But some special modern arts are far from magnificent. They are devoted to the artist’s autograph, the record of human enthusiasm for human ‘things as they are in plain daylight.’ We have the Dutch masters with their portraits and domestic interiors, and all who have followed in the great modern schools of realism. Portrait men like Robert Henri gave an electrifying sense of human life and strength. They hate all the decorative side of life as heartily as an Arab hates idols. [Note 3]

“There are artists devoted to the ragged or humble side of life, as our Horatio Walker or Winslow Homer. And there was great French [Jean-François] Millet. We have poets like Burns and Wordsworth. The charm of all these is a different pleasure from that of nature, or classic art. We like them for the same reason that we prefer the newspapers to the epic poets. We have in literature Thackeray, Zola, Balzac, Howells and Hardy. The finger of Man, creator, writing of God, Creator. The practiced eye can tell by the way the thing is done how white-hot the artist was in his devotion, and share that devotion. The life that goes into such art is the real life we are living in and about this city, and our form of Christianity is closest to this kind of art. It saves us from the brittle barren literalness of science, or the cynicism of money-hunger. We find spectacles worth our looking, in the grimmest workingman, the most commonplace child, in giving the cup of cold water, in the widow giving her mite, in the sower going forth to sow, in the prayer of the publican, in the simple bread and wine of the memorial feast.

“With all this in mind think again of Peter’s confession, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God’ [Matthew 16:16]. Christ is the son of the God of Splendor, and of Nature, yet he is most the son of the living God, the God of this life within us. He is the Christ who was without form or comeliness, the carpenter’s son, the fisherman’s master, the roadside friend who had nowhere to lay his head. He shows us how to make the most squalid spectacles of human life worthy of reverence. And he shows us how to revere that humanity we all love so well, so that our love for it shall not destroy us.

“When we have reverence for God within plain humanity, the God behind the great splendors of the world, and the God behind nature, we have revered Him through all things that

the human eye may see, we have grasped the message of this discourse that the presence of beauty is the presence of God.

Plastic Art Not Essential.

“Plastic art is not the most necessary thing in the world. England’s great history was entirely without it. We have done without it. But every sign indicates that the day of American unmitigated ugliness has passed. We are destined to enjoy ourselves through our eyes. American business methods and business structures will be accentuated, but out of business hours we will be a luxurious, pleasure-loving, beauty-seeking people. Most artists think that time is far away, but the signs of the day are against them.

“More people every day give interest earnestly to architecture, parks, good interiors, literature, music, the drama, poetry. Schools are turning out students by the thousand that will change the fibre of the nation in the end.

“The Christ of the first chapter of Revelation is the Christ that should be the king at that time, the infinite glorious Christ with the countenance that is as the sun that shineth in his strength. He only can save us from an irreverent orgy of the eyes that shall destroy us. We would crown Him King in His beauty, and would consecrate to Him our palaces and our treasuries. We should see behind the flame the eyes of the craftsman of Nazareth. Who knows but that in the new earth there shall be a clearing away of all splendors, and the only beauty left be the world that God saw was good in the beginning, and simple homes holding contrite, reverent humanity?” [Note 4]

Notes

[Note 1] See William Morris (1834-1896), “The Lesser Arts,” *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882), pp. 58-59: “That thing which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labor. I do not believe he can be happy in his labor without expressing that happiness; and especially is this so when he is at work at anything in which he specially excels. A most kind gift is this of nature, since all men, nay, it seems all things too, must labor” Online at Google Books.

[Note 2] Sidney Lanier (1842-1881), “The Marshes of Glynn,” lines 71-78. Online at several sites: bartleby.com, poemhunter.com, etc.

[Note 3] Painter Robert Henri (1865-1929) was VL’s instructor at the New York School of Art (1905). See *Uncle Boy: A Biography of Nicholas Vachel Lindsay*, Chapter 15, online at:

www.VachelLindsayHome.org

[Note 4] For VL’s delivery of this sermon in New York City in 1908, see *Uncle Boy*, Chapter 19.

Reference are a necessity to make polymorphic generic programming (including operator overloading) possible. Without them the only way to refer-to something is by pointer. But to access a value by pointer, a pointer must be explicitly de-referenced (via * or ->). If you are writing a generic algorithm and you don't want to pass-by value, you have to use a different syntax in expression (taking care of pointer de-referencing) respect to the one you use with values, for example by using *a + *b instead of just a+b. By using reference (think to them as implicitly self-de-referencing pointers) Necessity is often opposed to chance and contingency. In a necessary world there is no chance. Everything that happens is necessitated, determined by the laws of nature. There is only one possible (necessary!) future. The great atomist Leucippus stated the first dogma of determinism, an absolute necessity. "Nothing occurs at random, but everything for a reason and by necessity." Contingency is the idea that many things or events are neither necessary nor impossible. P is necessarily true in all possible worlds. The Necessity of Identity. In the physical and logical worlds, no entity can fail to be identical to itself. The only strict identity is self-identity. So we can speak loosely of the necessity of identity. But is this a tautology, empty of meaning, like $A = A$?