

Art as Preaching/Preaching as Art: Howard Finster and the Painted Word

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“(A) painter’s altar may be her easel, where sacraments of canvas and oil evoke the grace of God’s creative genius.”¹ I had read these words of Barbara Brown Taylor several times on my many journeys through *The Preaching Life*. Never did they take on such embodied meaning, however, as they did while I was studying the life and work of preacher-turned-folk artist Howard Finster. Finster, a Baptist preacher and self-taught artist, has been in the forefront of the folk or outsider art movement that has become a formidable force in the art world over the past two decades.

While all outsider artists by nature have interesting stories to tell, few are as fascinating as the story of Howard Finster, whose combination of backwoods Baptist preaching, extraterrestrial visions, and cultural engagement create a character and work like nothing else known in ecclesiastical or artistic circles. He redefines the term “eclectic” with credits that include articles about his work in *Life*, *Time*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, designs for album covers for R.E.M. and the Talking Heads, commercial advertisements, and an eight-foot stylized Coke bottle commissioned for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Finster’s winsome personality and unique outlook on life have made him a popular speaker on campuses across the country and even earned him an appearance on Johnny Carson’s “Tonight Show” in 1983. Quite clearly he has been transformed, as all his biographers note, from an itinerant country preacher into a postmodern icon.

After forty years as a preacher, Finster’s primary world has become the world of visual art. Special exhibits of Finster’s work have been held in cities across the United States and Europe, and his works feature in countless prestigious collections and museums. To regard Finster only as a visual artist, however, is to miss the most extraordinary dimension of his work, for even Finster still considers himself to be a preacher: one “sent to earth to save souls through sacred art.”² The interweaving of traditional religious values with contemporary American culture by this “Stranger from Another World,” “God’s Last Red Light on Planet Earth,” as he calls himself, challenges us to shift the angle of vision on our own familiar worlds of faith and art and provides a refreshing way of reflecting upon the preaching task.

From Preacher to Artist

Howard Finster was born in 1916 in Valley Head, Alabama, just over the state line from the northwest Georgia towns in which he would spend most of his life. One of thirteen children born to a farmer and sawmill lumberjack and the daughter of a Baptist preacher, he had his first of many visions at the age of three, a few weeks after the death of his sister, Abby Rose. Lost one day on his family’s multi-acre farm, he searched in vain for his mother and began to cry. He looked up to see Abby Rose coming down from heaven. “She was coming down at an angle toward the center of the old mill

road,” Finster later recalled. “When she got about three or four feet above the middle of the road, she started back up on the same angle she came down. Three steps kept disappearing behind her and when she got up as high as I saw her coming down, I called her name.”³ Finster thought Abby Rose would accompany him across the field, but instead she turned away from him, revealing beneath a long white robe the checked skirt he remembered her wearing before she died. That first vision, Finster later realized, served as a defining moment for his life and art, sensitizing him to a unique mode of communication with God and inspiring the image of white-robed figures processing on stairways of clouds prevalent in Finster’s paintings.

“Born anew in spirit” during a revival at age thirteen, Finster acknowledged a call to preach two years later. He delivered his first sermon at age sixteen in Lee’s Chapel in Valley Head. From then on he preached in brush harbors, tent meetings, and revivals as well as churches. He served as pastor of a Baptist church for fifteen years and later as an itinerant preacher. When asked about his denominational affiliation in an interview, Finster replied, “I’m everything — Baptist, Church of Christ, Holiness, Presbyterian. The democracy of our country is that every man has his own religion.” While Finster has never been concerned about liturgical or denominational formality, he is concerned that the word of God as he interprets it be free to flourish. “Prayer and the word of God should be anywhere,” Finster asserted. As his later life has revealed, “anywhere” includes especially the world of visual art.

It would be decades, however, before Finster made a conscious move from preacher to artist. He served as the pastor of rural churches but made his living in various factory and manual labor jobs and then as a bicycle and lawnmower repairman. It was while painting a bicycle in 1976 that he received the vision calling him to paint sacred art: “(O)ne day I was workin’ on a patch job on a bicycle, and I was rubbin’ some white paint on that patch with this finger here, and I looked at the round tip o’ my finger, and there was a human face on it. I could see it plain as day. And right then a warm feelin’ come over my body, and a voice spoke to me and said, ‘Paint sacred art.’ And I recognized that feelin’ as a holy feelin’, and I knew that was God talkin’ to me, and I didn’t think I could do it. I didn’t think I was capable.”⁴

At first, like many a prophet before him, he resisted the idea that he had been called to a ministry of art: “And so I says, ‘I can’t.’ I says, ‘Others can do it, but not me.’ That’s the trouble with people today: they just says, ‘Not me. It can be Abraham, but not me. It can be Edison, but not me. It can be Elvis, but not me.’ And that’s the way the world is, and that’s the way I was.”⁵ He had spent his whole adult life as an itinerant preacher while deriving most of his income from his repair business. But being a “visionary man,” as he always acknowledged, he knew he could not ignore such a significant message from God. Out of what Finster refers to as his ability for “quick thinkin’” in any emergency, he pulled a one-dollar bill from his wallet and taped it to a scrap piece of plywood lying in his repair shop. He painted the image of George Washington on the plywood, thus beginning what has become a prolific and lucrative career in art. “It’s a funny thing,” Finster observed. “Outta my unbelief is where I’ve collected my faith. It was just like when I was called to preach at fifteen years old. Just the very thing I don’t believe I can do, that’s what God wanted me to try. So I started off right there to makin’ art and doin’ paintings.”⁶

Finster continued his preaching, but most of his energy went into paintings, sculptures, and other *objets d’art*. “After forty years of ministry,” one biographer

wrote, “his preaching now moved into a visual arena. The painting became the sermon, and the world his church.”⁷ One gets the sense from writings about and by Finster that this new preaching venue was not entirely unwelcome. In a biographical sketch of Finster which appears on his website, Beverly Finster, Howard’s daughter, shares a significant moment in her father’s move from preacher to artist. “The story is told,” Beverly writes, “that the Reverend Howard Finster gave up preaching because one Sunday night he asked who remembered his Sunday morning sermon. No one did.”⁸ This reputed incident causes a chill of recognition to run down the spines of all who stand in pulpits on Sunday mornings. Finster himself confirmed his frustration as a preacher in comments concerning the Bible verses he plastered all over the “museum garden” he had constructed in his backyard. “‘He’s crazy,’” Finster expected his neighbors to say in response to his less-than-subtle declaration of biblical truths by means of assemblages of found objects and hand-lettered signs, “‘because they’s a Bible in ever’ house for miles all ‘round here,... But at the last church I pastored, over at Chelsea, they’d forgotten my messages from one service to another. And a lotta people didn’t even know what was *in* them Bibles at their houses.’”⁹ In a unique and unprecedented way, “God’s Last Red Light on Planet Earth” would show them just what those Bibles contained.

The Artist as Preacher

Howard Finster had been something of a folk artist many years before his vision to paint sacred art. He began fashioning gathered items into symbolic objects such as a five foot high model of the Baptist church he pastored and a replica of the cross of Christ and placed them into a “museum garden” in the backyard of his Trion, Georgia, home. The Trion museum garden evolved into what Finster called the “Plant Farm Museum,” renamed “Paradise Garden” by its visitors, adjacent to his Summerville home. Paradise Garden, built on reclaimed swampland, is, as one visitor remarked, “Four acres filled with bright, shiny reminders that Jesus is gonna be swinging back this way, and we’d all best get ready.” After his vision, Finster painted and sculpted biblical figures, famous inventors, and American heroes which he combined with Bible verses and his own words of wisdom painted on large slabs of plywood. These he added to the thousands of found objects already contained in Paradise Garden, objects that had come to include such bizarre items as a young boy’s tonsils preserved in a jar as well as the remains of an unknown body donated by a doctor. (The body, encased in a concrete coffin, was to serve as a vivid reminder of the finality of death apart from salvation. The significance of the tonsils is less evident. We only know that they were donated by their former owner who thought they would be an appropriate addition to the garden.) Finster lettered a sign in red paint and hung it near the entrance to Paradise Garden. The sign said, “I took the pieces you threw away, and put them together by night and day. Washed by rain, dried by sun, a million pieces all in one.” The “million pieces” of Paradise Garden appropriately represent Finster as a preacher, for despite its apparent chaos, the garden portrays very intentional and deeply-held convictions. It has been described as a Baptist-style walk-in Bible and catechism. By means of the organization of the garden’s space and placement of the objects in it, Finster created a series of what he calls “simultions” (his word for the “similitudes” referred to in the King James’s translation of Hosea 12:10, a verse often quoted by Finster to justify his work: “I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied

visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets”) that evoke biblical images and references as visitors encounter particular objects and works of art. A tall pine in the middle of the garden represents the “tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). A vine recalls Jesus’ metaphor for his connectedness to his followers as recorded in the gospel of John. A pond reminds visitors of the water of life depicted at the end of Revelation.

In Paradise Garden, Finster created what is on one level a museum of modern cultural artifacts, a blatant celebration of the secular, but what is on a deeper level an entrance into the world of the sacred. His “anagogical method, rising from the material to the spiritual”¹⁰ was intended to offer an alternative vision of life: a life lived in harmony with God. When individual works are viewed in the context of the whole garden, they lose their otherwise bizarre qualities and become expressions “of what is integral to (Finster’s) most fundamental perception of the nature of things.”¹¹ Paradise Garden was intended to be a place, according to Finster, where people could relax and “get away from the nerve-breakin’ highway traffic and get away from your office job.” But it was also intended as a place where the human soul would be confronted—and comforted—by the reality of the divine presence. You can walk in the garden, Finster said, and “see God’s flowers and his grass and ever’ thing, and see what man done, too, mixed in along with God’s work.”¹² The success of Finster’s intentions for Paradise Garden was confirmed by Susie Mee, once a neighbor of Finster and now a member of the New York art community, after a visit to the garden: “Under Finster’s eyes and hands, these objects—this trash, this junk—‘glows’; he has—to borrow a religious term—resurrected them. It is in this context, I think, that Finster’s real genius lies. He has, almost unwittingly, given us hints about how to deal with the cast off, vulgar parts of our culture, and there are many.”¹³

In the resurrected objects of Paradise Garden we get a glimpse of the theological and spiritual themes that would come to dominate Finster’s art. His work is about “how we’re livin’ in the Last Days” if we fail to repent and also accept responsibility for the care of God’s creation. The biblical stories he portrays are most often those Old Testament stories of punishment and destruction and inexplicable demonstrations of divine power that we mainline preachers prefer to ignore in exchange for more reasonable texts. The stories of the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh, and Old and New Testament apocalypses are among Finster’s favorite subjects. Inherent in these apocalyptic images and the many words that accompany them are his unequivocal teleological and soteriological understandings. Time for Finster moves inexorably from a singular moment of creation to a literal judgment day when the sun will turn black and the earth will be destroyed. (Finster’s obsession with the march of time is evident not only in the subjects of his paintings but in the fact that many are not only signed and dated but marked with a notation of the precise minute that he finished them, such as his “Sea of Time” painting which is marked “9:59 PM July 1983.”) Life as we know it shall pass away. The end time will be signaled by plagues, famine, war, and stars falling from heaven.

But in the midst of the dark and disturbing images of his work, Finster always sounds a note of hope. The intention of his preaching through art is transformation: transformation of the individual heart and transformation of a world that appears headed for destruction. We are moving relentlessly toward the day of God’s judgment, but until that moment there is opportunity for repentance. He depicts in vivid imagery

the descent into hell inevitable for those who do not believe, but above the damned who march into hell, there is another procession of saints clothed in white who climb heavenward into the presence of God. Until that day there is work to be done: tending the sacred nature of the earth and the human and animal communities that inhabit it. His preaching in both word and art is filled with admonitions to love and respect others, to keep the world clean, to receive with gratitude all good gifts of the earth, and to “bear good fruit.”

As otherworldly as Finster’s images are, however, he never avoids confronting culture. In an early painting entitled “The Devil’s Vice,” he depicts a woman caught in the mouth of a huge vise (note the play on words), the vise decorated with warnings of the evils of drugs, warfare, hijackings, and natural disasters. He moves effortlessly between the worlds of the ancient biblical text and technology, between the worlds of medieval cosmology and popular culture, creating alien juxtapositions that cause the viewer to stop and search for meaning. He may depict the story of the Old Testament prophet Jonah alongside a cultural icon like Marilyn Monroe or Elvis Presley. He may name superpowers as the participants in the final cosmic showdown at Armageddon. Spaceships exist side-by-side with Noah’s ark, and the prophetic words of Jesus are wrapped around an AK-47 rifle. Finster’s work, as chaotic as it appears, seems to be his attempt at creating order in a world that often feels as though it is spinning out of control. His jarring, dissonant images are his way of dealing with the reality of those events in life that are hostile, inexplicable, and devoid of hope. For Finster, all the world is sacred space, and all of time is absorbed into the eternal plan of God. He employs his cultural background “as a springboard for a fresh and compelling vision that soars into the creative beyond. As he soars in his art and in the other facets of his personal vision, he startles people into their own moments of delighted surprise, not so much at what he achieves, but toward a more elemental and joyous wonder at the gift of being human in the universe.”¹⁴

Finster reveals such “elemental and joyous wonder” at his own place in the universe. In a candid and charming reflection on his life, he stated, “I believe God has used me as a spectacle. In another sense o’ the word, he showed the rich people and the universities and the people in the cities and the people all over the world what He could do with a sixth-grade student and a swamp fulla garbage.”¹⁵ In many ways, Finster has had the last laugh in the often insular world of art, for his works have brought him fame and fortune that few studied artists will ever achieve. His paintings and other creations number more than 40,000, and this rural preacher from Georgia has become known throughout the world. Nevertheless, he is ever cognizant of the fact that his primary calling is to be a preacher. “Now,” however, “he reaches out to the congregation of the world,” as his daughter puts it.¹⁶ Indeed, it is difficult to determine where art ends and preaching begins when viewing the creations of “The World’s Minister of Folk Art.” “God sent me here to preach His Word in the Last Days,” Finster declares, “and to be a Man of Visions, and to tell the world ‘bout my visions through my sacred art and my garden, to bring out things where they wouldn’t be forgotten. And that’s what I’m adoin’. I’m fulfillin’ God’s plan for me on Earth’s Planet.”¹⁷

The Preacher as Artist

The graphic juxtaposition of art and preaching in the work of Howard Finster provides an interesting and helpful way of reflecting upon the nature and practice of

preaching. Since the earliest associations of preaching with classical rhetoric in the work of Augustine, the term “art” has appeared in discussions of homiletics until preaching was defined essentially as “an art” in Alan of Lille’s classic twelfth-century work, *The Art of Preaching*. Homileticians of more recent centuries, including Phillips Brooks and, more recently, David Buttrick, have been adamant in their assertions that preaching is *not* an art. The debate over the “art” of preaching will continue to rage on, much of it fueled by different understandings of semantics. Nevertheless, there are areas of confluence between preaching and art that can be discerned against the backdrop of Howard Finster’s life and work and can enhance our proclamation of the gospel.

Like art, preaching can point to new worlds by engaging the unlimited creativity of the imagination. In his Beecher Lectures, Walter Brueggemann challenged us as preachers “to be poets that speak against a prose world.”¹⁸ The radical nature of gospel truth has been “flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane” in the modern world.¹⁹ “Sunday morning is the practice of a counter life through counter speech,” Brueggemann asserts, the church being perhaps “the last place left in our society for imaginative speech that permits people to enter into new worlds of faith and to participate in joyous, obedient life.”²⁰ Indeed, Charles Rice adds in calling for a reconsideration of the artistic qualities of preaching, “it is the nature of faith to live by imagination, to rely upon material expression of what is deeply known but difficult to say.”²¹ What is “deeply known” by the community of faith is God’s love and grace made manifest in Jesus Christ, but such wondrous love defies translation into words. It demands the employment of a panoply of communicational tools and the engagement of all the powers of human imagination. Thus, “(t)he church’s central task is an imaginative one,” suggests Barbara Brown Taylor, meaning not a fanciful or fictional task “but one in which the human capacity to imagine—to form mental pictures of the self, the neighbor, the world, the future, to envision new realities—is both engaged and transformed.”²²

Whatever else he succeeds in doing, there is no doubt that artist/preacher Howard Finster enables us to envision new realities and invites us to enter into new worlds of faith. He self-consciously identifies himself as a visionary artist as opposed to a realist or an impressionist, although his art is replete with elements of the latter two. Finster’s calling as he interprets it is to point to a world that runs parallel to and, at times, intersects our world but that transcends our world by its full expression of the splendor of God. “This world here is just a testin’ ground for the world to come,” Finster has observed.²³ He claims to have seen “the world to come” through his visionary travels, but if pressed, all people of faith—especially preachers—must confess that they, too, have glimpsed that world at some time. Otherwise our faith and the message we preach are meaningless. Our continuing challenge as preachers is to “paint” a compelling portrait of that new world, the kingdom of God, through our words of gospel proclamation. “The poet/prophet,” Brueggemann declares, “is a voice that shatters settled reality and evokes new possibility in the listening assembly. Preaching continues that dangerous, indispensable habit of speech. The poetic speech of text and of sermon is a prophetic construal of a world beyond the one taken for granted.”²⁴ Finster’s sermons in paint and sculpture are such prophetic construals of a world beyond this one as confirmed by this reaction to Paradise Garden by Susie Mee: “When I left his garden that afternoon, I felt myself to have been transformed. I felt that I had

learned how to look upon the ugliness around me with fresh eyes, and—with the baptism of the imagination—to raise it to another level.”²⁵

Understanding preaching as art captures qualities of preaching that transcend reduction to a set of rules. After almost twenty years of preaching and four years of teaching preaching, I have come to an important realization: the only thing more difficult to do than preach is to try to teach other people *how* to preach. I realize now that it is the “artful” quality of preaching that makes it very difficult—seemingly, at times, impossible—to teach. Preaching involves learned skills and disciplined practice, to be sure, but it involves more than these. There is an ineffable quality in effective preaching that defies any effort to identify or duplicate it. Artists would call this quality inspiration; we preachers know it to be the work of the Holy Spirit.

In describing his process of creating art, Finster is proud of the fact that he does not plan his work. Painting, he says, “just comes across my soul.” So it is—or should be—for the preacher. In discussing the work of preaching, Barbara Brown Taylor concludes: “It is as hard for a preacher to say how this is done as it is for a painter to say how a tree takes shape on canvas.... All the parts of preaching can be taught: exegesis, language, metaphor, development, delivery. What is hard to teach is how to put them all together, so that what is true is also beautiful, and evocative, and alive.”²⁶ I was reminded of this elusive dimension of preaching while listening to an interview with actress Meryl Streep last fall. The interviewer asked her to reflect on how she does what she does. Streep laughed and confessed that she cannot articulate how she acts as she does; it is simply part of who she is. Often she is asked to teach in acting schools and workshops, Streep said, but she always declines, baffled as to how to begin to teach what is such a natural part of herself.

So it is for the preacher. All the parts of preaching can be taught, as Taylor says, but the creativity that inspires a celebrated actress like Meryl Streep or a renowned artist like Howard Finster is a gift that can only be received in gratitude. It is the voice of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Finster would be quick to say, that fuel the flames of creativity and paint ideas across his soul. While few of us would dismiss the studied, crafted, hard work of writing sermons (least of all those of us who make our livings teaching preaching), perhaps there is room in our practice of preaching for greater attentiveness to the creative, life-giving Spirit that can transform our stolid words into intimations of grace.

Like works of art, sermons are ours, yet not ours. In a conversation of his PBS series on Genesis, Bill Moyers asked his panelists what it means to be made in the image of God. Artist Hugh O'Donnell acknowledged that “(t)he question of making something in one’s likeness is continuously present in the artist’s life because one is the author of what one does and yet one doesn’t somehow completely own what one does. You make something and it separates from you, as happened to God’s creation in the Garden. You can see the same dynamic in art.”²⁷ You can also see the same dynamic in preaching. Our sermons are always ours, yet they are not ours. They are finished after delivery, but in another way they are just beginning as we step down from the pulpit. This paradoxical nature of preaching is the result of the reality of the many participants in the act of preaching: preacher, listeners, and, above and within the process, a God who yearns to be known. We might even extend the connections to include the individuals and communities who gave us the written text of Scripture, scholars and exegetes who have plumbed the depths of that text for meaning, and the

“cloud of witnesses” who have shaped our appropriations of Christian faith.

An awareness of the fact that our sermons are not ours alone was heightened by Fred Craddock’s inductive approach to preaching that opened the door to many new homiletical expressions. The most effective preaching, to be sure, is not preaching that reduces the gospel to a summary of truths proclaimed from on high but preaching that invites the listeners to discover and experience those truths for themselves. More recent works on collaborative preaching suggest intentional ways of being attentive to the context and needs of listeners so that “(p)roperly done, (the sermon) is a particular word to a particular people at a particular moment in time. The language, the images, and the concerns all reveal a congregation as well as a preacher, which makes those who listen to a sermon collaborators in the creation of it.”²⁸

Even Howard Finster, who notes on many of his works the exact minute of their completion, would, I believe, acknowledge the unfinished nature of his artwork. He makes bold and unequivocal statements of his convictions through his art, but there is a provocative dimension inherent in those statements, a dimension that invites the viewers to belief. In this way Finster’s paintings continue to take shape long after he has put his paintbrush down, as our sermons continue to take shape long after the pews are emptied on Sunday mornings. One art critic concluded an essay about Finster’s work with the following confession: “I am struck with the most awful of admissions, given this day, after looking at Howard Finster’s work: I wonder about the state of my soul.”²⁹ Would that our sermons had the same power of conviction.

Of course, none of this is new, for the “art” of preaching is as old as the gospel itself. Jesus, the consummate preacher and artist, used words to evoke images and images to evoke words, all in an effort to communicate the life-giving, transformative power of God’s grace and to call into being a new way of life. Long before the assemblage of Finster’s Paradise Garden, Jesus began taking the pieces the world has thrown away, gathering them together by night and day, to make a new creation. Using images such as seeds growing in secret, coins, sheep, and people lost and then found, wide-eyed children, and lavish banquets, he painted for us a vision of the kingdom of God. Now we as preachers have the great privilege and awesome responsibility of painting that vision for those to whom we speak. The vision painted in word and image is compelling, but the choice of moving toward its realization is ours. As an angel on a sign at the entrance to Paradise Garden proclaims, “It’s your move; God has made his.” That’ll preach.

Notes

¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Preaching Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 1993), 35.

² Howard Finster (as told to Tom Patterson), *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World, Man of Visions Now on This Earth* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 10.

³ J. F. Turner, *Howard Finster: Man of Visions* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 12.

⁴ Finster, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World*, 123.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 124-25.

⁷ Philadelphia Art Alliance, *Howard Finster, Man of Visions: The Garden and Other Creations* (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Art Alliance, 1984), 8.

⁸ Beverly Finster, “Howard Finster, A Man of Vision,” Howard Finster Homepage (www.finster.com).

⁹ Finster, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World*, 118-19.

¹⁰ James Smith Pierce, “Teaching by Simultaneous of Folk Art,” in *Howard Finster: Painter of Sermons* (

Folk Art Society of Kentucky, 1988), 14.

¹¹ William Rhodenhiser, "Perspectives on the Religion of an Uneducated Genius," in *Sermons in Paint: A Howard Finster Folk Art Festival*, ed. Ann Frederick Oppenheimer and Susan Hankla (Richmond, Va.: University of Richmond, 1984), 18.

¹² Finster, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World*, 115.

¹³ Susie Mee, "Afterword," in Howard Finster, *Howard Finster: Man of Visions* (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 1989), n.p.

¹⁴ Rhodenhiser, "Perspectives," 18.

¹⁵ Finster, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World*, 189.

¹⁶ Beverly Finster, "Howard Finster, A Man of Vision," Howard Finster Homepage.

¹⁷ Finster, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World*, 178.

¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Charles L. Rice, *The Embodied Word: Preaching as Art and Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 101.

²² Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, 39.

²³ Finster, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World*, 187.

²⁴ Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, 4.

²⁵ Susie Mee, "Afterword," in Finster, *Howard Finster: Man of Visions*, n.p.

²⁶ Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, 83.

²⁷ Bill Moyers, *Genesis: A Living Conversation* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 6.

²⁸ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Bread of Angels* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 1997), xi.

²⁹ Thomas McGonigle, "Tongues of Paint," in *Sermons in Paint*, ed. Ann Frederick Oppenheimer and Susan Hankla (Richmond, Va.: University of Richmond, 1984), 23.