Gwendolyn Brooks? Essay, Research Paper

An Analysis of Gwendolyn Brooks?

?The Preacher: Ruminates Behind the Sermon?

In Gwendolyn Brooks? poem, ?The Preacher: Ruminates Behind the Sermon?, she shows the reader a different side to God. The theme of the poem is that God, as esteemed as He may be, is just as human as we are. This is shown in a few different stanzas where Brooks suggests that God feels human emotions and desires simple human activities. Another important thing that expresses the theme is the style in which the poem is written.

One of the most obvious places where God is humanized is in stanza three. ?But who walks with him?-dares to take His arm, / To slap Him on the shoulder, tweak His ear, / Buy Him a Coca-Cola or a beer. . .?(p.182). The author makes it very clear in the way that she writes these lines that, in her opinion, God desires (or should desire) to partake in activities that human beings take for granted, simple human activities, like buying a beer or horsing around. These are the kinds of things that people would never imagine God to want to do because He is so high above human beings. Brooks, on the other hand, seems to think that God gets bored being so lofty and would not mind coming down to shoot some pool or maybe go bowling. This is a clear way of humanizing God, through humanizing the things He wants to do.

Brooks also gives God human emotions. This is important in expressing her theme because, being the God is an all-powerful being, it is hard to imagine Him feeling lonely or happy in the way that we (human beings) do. In stanza four, Brooks does this quite well. ?Perhaps sometimes He tires of being great / In solitude. Without a hand to hold.?(p.183). These two lines are affective in humanizing God?s emotions because of the emotions they evoke in the reader. As a person, remaining in solitude all the time, would be quite lonely and sad. Therefore the reader is able to imagine that it must make God sad sometimes, sitting up in Heaven all alone. Suddenly, the reader is able to relate to God on human terms, which is helpful in pushing Brooks? theme.

The style in which the poem is written also lends to Brooks? desire to humanize God. The poem rhyme scheme is not as pronounced. This is because of punctuation which causes the reader to pause in places that can throw off the exact rhythm of the rhyme scheme. For example, in the first stanza, the rhyme scheme is ABBC, but the punctuation causes a pause in the rhythm right before the first rhyming word and another pause before the second rhyming word. ?Nobody loves a master. No. Despite (B). / The bright hosannas, bright dear-Lords, and bright (B) / Determined reverence of Sunday eyes(C).?(p.182). The sentences contained within the poem do not exactly work with the rhythm of the rhyming words. This effect causes the poem to sound more like casual conversation. God is not usually thought of as a very casual man, but because of the style that the poem is written in, the reader is in a more casual state of mind. This state of mind causes the reader to view God as more casual, hence, more human.

I really enjoyed this poem in particular because I myself like to view God on a more human level. I do not think God should be intimidating. Looking at God in a more humanly perspective clears away some of the fear that people seem to have of God, Heaven, and Hell. Brooks does an effective job of showing a more human side of God. She does this through her descriptions of His possible emotions about being up high and watching over us with no one to keep him company. She does this through her descriptions of some simple human activities that God may wish to partake in. The style of the poem creates an atmosphere of casualty for the reader causing a more casual look at God. Brooks successfully relays her theme which says that God is just as human as we are.

Brooks, Gwendolyn. “The Preacher: Ruminates behind the Sermon”. The Premier Book of Major Poets. Ed. Anita Dore. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1970. 182-183