

The High Calling

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The Music of the Spheres

By Stan Key

I want to invite you to use your sanctified imagination and picture David sitting on a grassy hill taking care of sheep. It is a clear night, and the starry heavens are magnificent in splendor. Strumming a praise chorus on his guitar (aka, a harp), David is lost in awe and wonder as he worships the One who created all this. The song he sings has been preserved for us in Psalm 19. As you watch, you realize that David's worship also includes *listening*. It is as if the moon and the stars are trying to say something—no, *sing* something! David tells us what he hears: “The heavens declare the glory of God” (v. 1 ESV). As David worships, he elaborates on this basic truth (vv. 1–6). This cosmic message is:

- *Constant*—“Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (v. 2). In other words, the message conveyed through creation never stops.
- *Universal*—“Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (v. 4). In other words, everyone everywhere can hear what the heavens are saying.
- *Non-verbal*—“There is no speech, nor are there words...” (v 3). Like a symphony, a painting, or an aroma, the communication is powerful, but a bit ambiguous. God is

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“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1 ESV)

glorious: *that* message comes through loud and clear. But is he good? Just? Loving? Is he one or many? Near or far? Male or female? Good or evil? Can we know him? Does he know we exist? Does he care? The heavens do not answer these questions!

Listening to the music of the spheres makes David aware of the fact that the message coming through nature provokes more questions than answers! This God of glory inspires awe and worship, but he has created a universe filled with both violets and violence, fun and fungus, candy and cancer. Listening to the cosmos,

David knows only two things for sure: there is a God, and he is glorious! This message is so obvious, so persistent, and so pervasive that only a fool could fail to hear it (see Ps. 14:1). But is that all we can know about God? Surely, he has more to reveal to us about himself than this.

As we listen in on David's worship, we realize that he is just getting warmed up! Rather than giving the benediction and putting his guitar back in its case, he adds a second verse to his praise chorus. After letting the non-verbal, sometimes ambiguous, message of creation serve as a sort of “Call to Worship” (vv. 1–6), David turns his attention to the

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Formed and Filled

By Matt Ayars



Newly appointed president of Wesley Biblical Seminary, Matt Ayars was formerly president and professor of Old Testament at Emmaus Biblical Seminary in Haiti. He also serves as an evangelist with the Francis Asbury Society. In this article, Dr. Ayars shows how the doctrine of creation is linked to the doctrine of sanctification.

The Creation story, as told in Genesis 1, presents us with a forming and filling motif. When all was “without form and void” (v. 2), God *formed* things and then *filled* them. He began the creation week by *forming* the light (Day 1), the heavens and the waters (Day 2), and the earth (Day 3). Then, he *filled* what he had made with the sun, moon, and stars (Day 4), birds and fish (Day 5), and finally animals and human persons (Day 6). The author is making it clear that creation was no random collection of unplanned events. It was perfectly and carefully orchestrated.



The forming and filling project comes to a climax with the creation of humanity. One could say that the creation of the man and the woman served as a sort of artist-signature for the entire creation event.

As we read this amazing text, we may wonder what the Creator/God looks like. Well, all we need do is look at the humans he made, because they are his image bearers. This goes far beyond physical appearance, of course. The man and the woman are given a command: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion...” (v. 28 ESV). God’s image is seen not only in who they are but also in what they do.

This forming and filling motif plays an even bigger role by helping the reader to understand God’s purpose for humanity, and indeed, for the entire cosmos. That purpose is to glorify God. Genesis 1 tells us that, from the very beginning, God’s plan has been to *form* the universe and then *fill* it with his glory. Just as the birds fill the sky and the fish fill the sea, the divine

image-bearers are intended to fill the earth, spreading his glory everywhere. Through these men and women, God intends to reveal himself to the ends of the earth. When we faithfully witness to God’s goodness through the embodied image we carry, we fulfill our highest and most important vocation.

God’s purpose for humans is the same today as it was in the beginning! This is why the Church exists and it defines her primary mission. When Jesus breathed on his disciples, giving them the gift of the Spirit (see Jn. 20:22), and then sent them forth to make disciples to the ends of the earth (see Matt. 28:19–20), we could say that he was re-enacting the Creation story told in Genesis 1–2. He was creating a new Adam, a new humanity, and a New Creation.

Because of sin, we understand that all human image-bearers can only partially and imperfectly do their work of reflecting the glory of God. Jesus is the preeminent divine image-bearer. In him, we have a perfect, unflawed picture of what God really looks like. The book of Hebrews puts the matter poignantly, explaining that Jesus is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, [upholding] the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3).

Once believers become united with Jesus by being *filled* with the Holy Spirit, they too begin to look like him and partake in the new Adam. This was the goal of Paul’s ministry as he explains to the Galatians: “I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is *formed* in you” (Gal. 4:19, emphasis added). Then, as these *formed* and *filled* believers spread across the earth in obedience to the Great Commission, they are working together with

God to get the Creation Project back on track. This is what the Creation is all about!

But it is also what sanctification is all about. Too often we think of sanctification only in terms of what God wants to do *in* us. It certainly is this, but there is so much more. Sanctification is really about what God wants to do *through* us! Through the lives of those he has *formed* and *filled*, God intends to spread his glory over all the earth!

This way of thinking about sanctification (holiness), has changed the way I interpret Hebrews 12:14, “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” Traditionally, we have thought that verse was talking about heaven as a reward for those who are sanctified. But perhaps the author of Hebrews is saying that unless you and I are sanctified wholly, no one around us will be able to see the Lord! It is the witness of our lives that makes it possible for others to see and experience the glory of God—or not! ✨

Listening to the Rocks

By Elisabeth Lind



Elisabeth Lind is a wife, mother of two, and production manager for PrayerCast (OneWay Ministries) in Naperville, IL. In visiting the Grand Canyon for the first time last year, she writes of how the awesome beauty of God's creation spoke deeply to her soul and moved her to worship. The following article is an adaptation of her blog post dated February 11, 2020, "A Greater Work."

I recently had the privilege of visiting the Grand Canyon. Because I had never been there before, it felt like I was on a pilgrimage. I was not disappointed. It was grander and more inspiring than I ever imagined it could be!

As my husband Ben and I drove north from Phoenix toward the canyon, we decided to stop in Sedona. The beauty of the landscape took my breath away. We pulled off the road to hike up a small mountain trail. Surrounded by red dirt and cacti, we took our time walking to the top of the hill. The view was spectacular! And to my surprise, I found myself in tears. It wasn't just what I saw that moved me. It was what I heard!

Just to be clear: my physical ears heard only the desert's silence. But my spiritual ears began to discern what the rocks were saying, no singing! They were all praising their Creator! In fact, the sound was so loud it was all I could hear! I realized that David must have had a similar experience when he wrote Psalm 19:

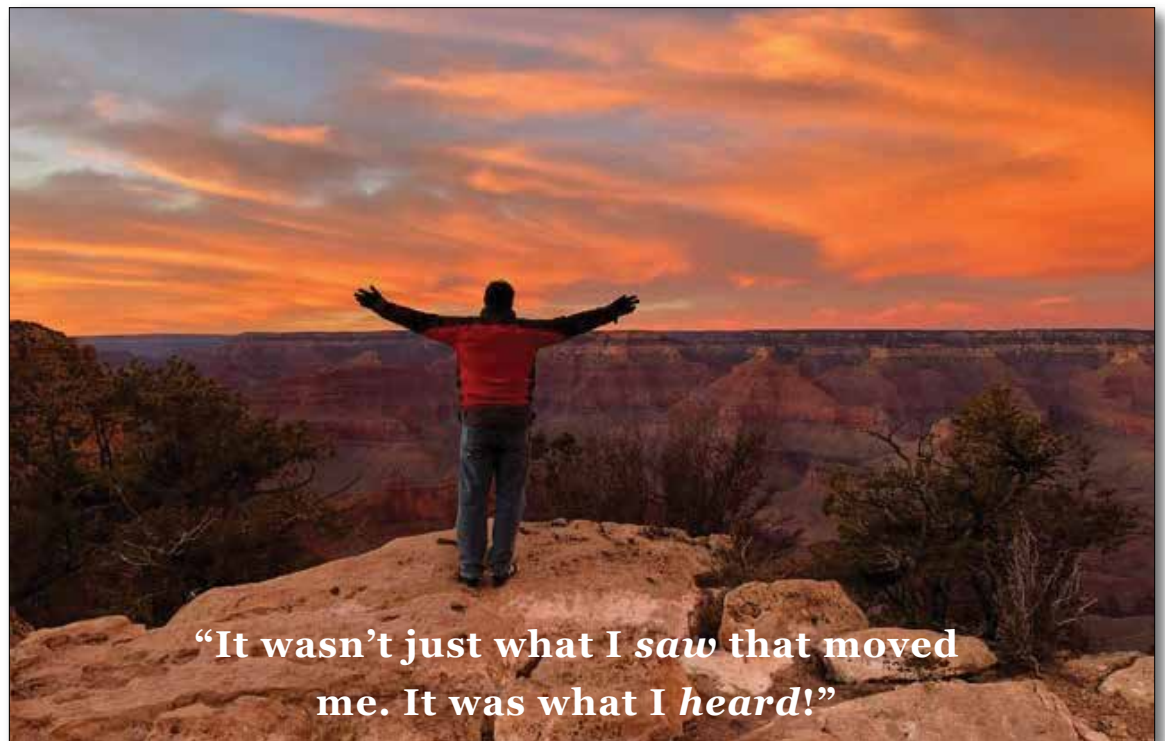
*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4 NIV)*

The rocks were proclaiming God's majestic greatness. It may sound a little crazy, but in the intensity of that moment of worship on top of that red mountain, I responded out loud to the rocks all around me, "I hear you! I hear you!"

Driving away from Sedona, I tried to prepare my heart for what lay ahead. Because the Grand Canyon was actually below us, there were no previews or sneak peeks of what was coming. We parked the car at the Welcome Center and began walking toward what was obviously the edge of the canyon. Our anticipation built with each approaching step. But nothing could have prepared me for that moment. No words are adequate to

describe what I saw, what I heard, and what I felt when I walked to the edge of that immense masterpiece. I gasped. Whether the other tourists around us realized it or not, I knew we were standing on holy ground!

Then, once again, I heard the rocks singing loudly God's praise. Didn't the other visitors hear it too? I wanted to run up to everyone around me, grab them by the shoulders, look them in the eye, and say: "Don't you hear it? Can't you hear what the rocks are saying?" Nearby, a park ranger was calmly explaining that no one knows for sure how the canyon was formed. "We have only theories," he said. My heart sank. "Only theories?" I silently screamed. "Isn't it obvious? Can't you hear what the rocks are saying?"



The next day, Ben and I hiked down into the canyon. All day long as we walked that narrow trail, we encountered other tourists, many of them from other countries. I lost count of how many different languages we heard that day. It dawned on me that the rocks were speaking a "language" that *everyone* could understand! They used no speech or words, yet their message was going out "to the ends of the world" (Ps. 19:3-4). Anyone from anywhere could plainly understand what creation was saying... if only they would listen. But as I hiked, I sadly realized that while many enjoyed the scenery, only a very few had ears to hear the rock's chorus. I remembered the sobering words of the apostle Paul writing to people in Rome:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

The next day, as we began our journey home, driving through the Arizona countryside my heart was full as I reflected on our

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The Message of Genesis 1

By John C. Lennox



Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford (emeritus), John Lennox is an internationally renowned speaker and author who is particularly interested in the interface of science, philosophy, and religion. In his book *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science* (Zondervan, 2011), Lennox summarizes the message of the first chapter in the Bible. This article is abridged and slightly edited (91–117).

The book of Genesis is foundational for the rest of the Bible. Its opening chapter does something of incalculable importance: it lays down the basis of a biblical worldview. It gives to us humans a metanarrative, a big story into which our lives can be fitted and from which they can derive meaning, purpose, and value.

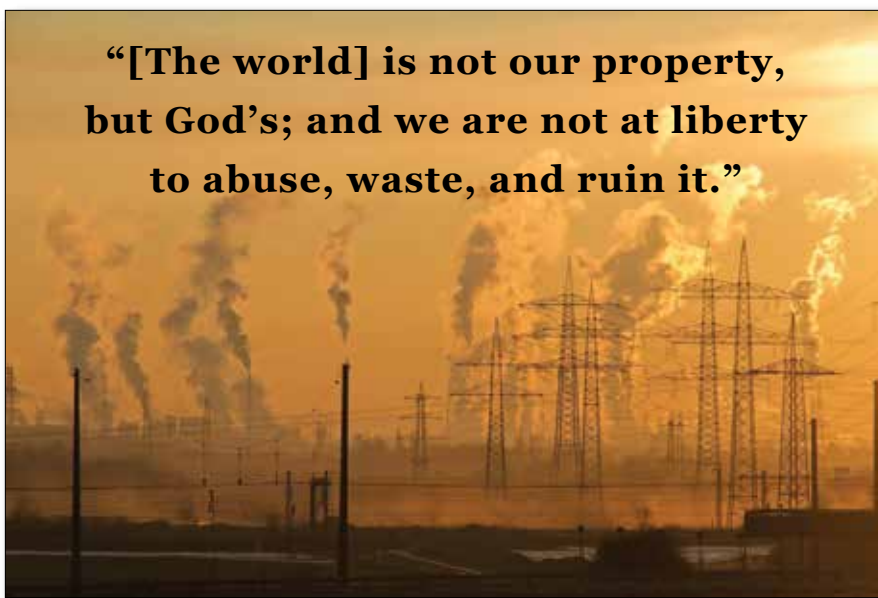
God Exists. The central tenet of the biblical worldview is that the ultimate reality is God: “In the beginning God...” (v. 1). Genesis is here making a profound truth-claim: there is a God. Both Genesis and the rest of the Bible will subsequently offer evidence to support this claim; however, the manner in which Genesis begins reminds us that every worldview must start somewhere. The Biblical worldview begins with God; the atheist worldview begins with the universe. However, Genesis 1 does not only tell us that there is a God, it tells us a great deal about him.

God Is the Eternal Creator. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (v. 1). This is not a truth-claim about God; it is a truth-claim about the physical universe. This assertion is of paramount importance. It answers the question, why is there something rather than nothing? It implies that this universe cannot explain itself, as secular atheism must maintain. It tells us that this material universe is not the ultimate reality. God is. God is eternal and uncreated. The universe, on the other hand, was not always there. This worldview is the exact opposite of ancient polytheism and contemporary secularism, both of which assume that matter is primary and everything else, including mind, is derivative.

God Is Distinct from His Creation. According to Genesis, God created the universe, but he is not identical with it. Noticeably the sun, moon, and stars are described purely physically, as “lights.” There is no hint of conferring any kind of divinity on them as in pagan mythologies. Nor is the universe some kind of emanation out of God, like sun rays emanate from the sun. Matter is made out of nothing, not out of God. The Genesis account, therefore, bears no traces of pantheism. Nor is God the remote deistic “god of the scientists,” who started the universe and then retired from the scene, taking no further interest in it.

God Is Personal. The phrases “God said,” “God saw that it was good,” “God blessed,” and, above all, “God made man in his own image” are clear indications that God is a person and not a force. There are dangers in a “Star Wars” mentality that conceives of God as “the Force.” We harness and use forces; so if we conceive of God as a force, we might wrongly imagine that God is some power that we can harness and use, rather than regarding him as our Creator and Lord, who is worthy of our allegiance and worship. It is for him to use us, not for us to use him.

God Is a Fellowship. Genesis 1 talks about the Spirit of God “hovering over the waters” (v. 2) and records God as saying, “Let us make man in our image” (v. 26, emphasis added). These statements surely anticipate New Testament teaching on the Trinity. This impression is heightened by the repeated use of the phrase: “And God said....” Creation involves the word of God. The apostle John identifies this word with Jesus Christ (see John 1:1–3, 14). Thus, God is revealed to us as a tri-unity, a fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



God Has a Goal in Creation. The text describes creation as occurring over a period of six days. In the final step God creates human beings in his image. They represent the pinnacle of God’s creation: they alone are said to bear his image. Planet Earth is special. It was created with an ultimate purpose—that of having human beings on it. This biblical teaching, that the Earth was specifically designed as a home for human beings, fits well

with what contemporary science tells us about the fine-tuning of the universe. In recent years, physicists and cosmologists have discovered that the fundamental constants of nature have to be “just right” in order for life as we know it to be possible. So, both Genesis and science say that the universe is geared to supporting human life.

God Creates by His Word. The repeated reference to the activity of the word of God in creation resonates very powerfully with me as a scientist. The idea that the universe did not come to be without the input of information and energy from an intelligent source seems to me to have been amply confirmed by scientific discovery. For example, there is the major scientific discovery—one of the greatest of all time—that in each of the ten trillion cells of our body we humans possess a “word” of mind-boggling length, the human genome. This “word” is 3.5 billion “letters” long, written in the four chemical “letters” C.G.A.T. Francis Crick and James Watson’s Nobel Prize-winning discovery of the double-helix structure of the DNA that carries this genetic information has given rise to the molecular biology revolution.

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Has Genesis Been Hijacked?

By Thane Hutcherson Ury



Some preaching and scholarship today may have us wondering what our evangelical colleges and seminaries are now teaching. The handling of Genesis, in particular, seems strikingly different than fifty years ago. In this article, Dr. Ury suggests that schools should be more forthright about their views on Genesis. Dr. Ury grew up in Asia, has trained seminarians in China since 2006, and now serves as scholar-in-residence for Intercultural Studies at Asbury University.

In Genesis 3:1–5 we read of Satan’s strategy for world dominion. He entices Eve with offers of special knowledge, liberation, and even godhood. Pretending to be her friend, he gains entrance into her mind by luring her to doubt God’s Word: “Did God actually say....?” he hissed. With this foothold, the stage was set for all his future wicked schemes and plans.

In recent years, traditional views of Genesis 1–11 have undergone many revisions in some evangelical institutions. The goalposts have shifted, with overly generous concessions being made to extra-biblical authority. Even some schools in our Wesleyan tradition seem to be whittling out more and more history from these pivotal chapters of the Bible. Traditional readings of Genesis are often scorned as quaint throwbacks to a time when the Church was scientifically ignorant.

More than a century ago, secular academia fully yielded to Darwinism. In time, mainline seminaries followed suit. Then, aspects of Neo-Darwinism also began infiltrating some evangelical schools; not just in the sciences, but also in the biblical disciplines. Could not the serpent’s strategy that wooed Eve to mistrust God’s Word also beguile some of our academicians today?

“Evolutionary Creationism” (EC) differs little from “Theistic Evolution.” EC defends the view that evolution is biblical and a God-ordained process. But this view also quietly includes the idea that untold suffering, disease, and death occurred for eons prior to humanity, thus cutting any link between Edenic sin and natural evil. This natural evil over deep time must also be made to fit God’s approbation that his work was “very good.” Bear this in mind when being invited to consider EC. We should be asking ourselves if this is the result of a dispassionate exegesis of Genesis or if something else is driving such conclusions.

If a school with deep evangelical roots condones EC, it should say so. If she no longer holds to the biblical authority as framed by her founders, should not alumni be told? Some may claim that pushing for clarity is “divisive.” I prefer to call it “honesty in advertising.”

When we hear that graduates of a “solid school” have deviated widely from that school’s traditional views, we may be shocked. But stop and consider. Is it possible that slow-release malignancies that these pastors received as students are partially to blame? Should we really be surprised that, when the first 11 chapters of the Bible are constantly assaulted, the next 1,178 chapters are harder to trust?

Let me offer a general summary of what is being taught today. EC is not monolithic and allows for endless variations within each rubric, so few EC apologists will defend all points. But

these should remind us to be more discerning to the views now allowed in some evangelical schools:

1. Genesis 1–11 is treated more along poetic lines. Thus, Adam and Eve may not have been real people. But whether they actually existed or not, they *must* fit an evolutionary narrative. Genesis is compared to other Ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, and we are told that Moses was likely influenced by and drew from these works.
2. Since the New Testament refers to Adam and Eve, many professors and theologians allow them to have been real people but will quickly add that they were not the first human-like beings and thus not created *de novo*.
3. Adam and Eve are cast as “special hominids” that God chose from preexisting hominids. They would have been anatomically identical to their progenitors. But in being “stamped” with God’s image, they obtained their unique status in the biblical story. This made them *spiritually* different. Again, is this the fruit of an unalloyed

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Evolutionary Hymn

C. S. Lewis

*Lead us, Evolution, lead us
Up the future’s endless stair:
Chop us, change us, prod us, weed us.
For stagnation is despair:
Groping, guessing, yet progressing,
Lead us nobody knows where.*

*Wrong or justice in the present,
Joy or sorrow, what are they
While there’s always jam tomorrow,
While we tread the onward way?
Never knowing where we’re going,
We can never go astray.*

*To whatever variation
Our posterity may turn
Hairy, squashy, or crustacean,
Bulbous-eyed or square of stern,
Tusked or toothless, mild or ruthless,
Towards that unknown god we yearn.*

*Ask not if it’s god or devil,
Brethren, lest your words imply
Static norms of good and evil
(As in Plato) throned on high;
Such scholastic, inelastic,
Abstract yardsticks we deny....*

*On then! Value means survival –
Value. If our progeny
Spreads and spawns and licks each rival,
That will prove its deity
(Far from pleasant, by our present
Standards, though it well may be).*

Creation and God's Goal

By John Oswalt



A beloved member of the FAS team since its beginning, Dr. John Oswalt has served as professor of the Old Testament for many years at Asbury Theological Seminary and for shorter terms at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Wesley Biblical Seminary. In this article, he helps us see the implications of the doctrine of creation for Christian discipleship.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the doctrine of creation for biblical theology. Without it, we are plunged back into the darkest paganism, with a cosmos that has emerged out of chaos and is always within a hairsbreadth of falling back into it. Without it, we are in an existence that is purposeless and directionless, an existence that is coming from nowhere and going nowhere. With it, however, we are in a world that exists on purpose, with order and design, with an ultimate goal beckoning us onward. To be sure, the doctrine must be coupled with three other doctrines: the transcendence of God, the love of God, and the absolute reliability, the truth, of God. But when these concepts are brought together, a wonderful picture emerges; one of whose most beautiful and compelling expressions is found in Isaiah 40:12–31.

If there is a sole Divine Being, separate from his creation, who is himself love and is completely reliable, several things follow. First, as he is wholly true, we may expect that there is truth in his creation, that things are so, whether we his creatures think so or not. Second, since his creation is a product of his mind and of his speech, we may expect that the creation will manifest an intelligent design. Third, since he is Love, we may believe that whatever purpose he had in mind in creating, it was for the good of his creatures and not for their harm. Fourth, we may believe that the order we perceive in the world is not accidental but is reflective of the character and nature of the Designer. Fifth, we may see that the expected end of creation is not death but life. Sixth, we may recognize that individual items, and above all, persons, have value in themselves as they are an expression of the intent of the Creator. They are not merely the momentary and meaningless manifestations of eternal, impersonal forces, a bubble, as it were, popping up and bursting on the surface of an endless, faceless ocean. Seventh, we may know that time is not an endless cycle but a process that is leading on to the realization of its desired fulfillment. So, I say again, the doctrine of creation is the irreplaceable foundation of all the rest of biblical theology.

But what is the goal of creation? Why did Yahweh, the three-personed Being, the I AM, speak the worlds into existence?

Every indication in the Bible is that he did so because he wants to share the self-giving, self-denying love that he enjoys within himself with others, multitudes upon multitudes of others. That, of course, is the nature of love. It is no accident that the most avid matchmakers in the world are the happily married. They want everyone else to know the joy they know in giving and receiving love. So, the Apostle John, in his first letter, says that he is sharing his experience of “fellowship” with Christ so that his readers can enjoy that same fellowship (1 John 1:3–4). Now he is clearly not talking about the mere casual social connections that most of us equate with the term “fellowship.” No, he is speaking about that “abiding,” that “dwelling in,” that “remaining in” of which he speaks elsewhere in his letter (2:28; 3:17; 4:15–16), as well as in his Gospel (15:4–9). For him, fellowship is that bonding, that intimacy, that attachment, that only self-denying love makes possible.

But what will it take for us to live in that kind of a fellowship of love with the eternal, transcendent One? Here enters an

intermediate purpose of creation. It is not the ultimate goal, but the penultimate one. What it will take for us to give and receive the love of the Most-High God is a sharing of his character. John says it this way:

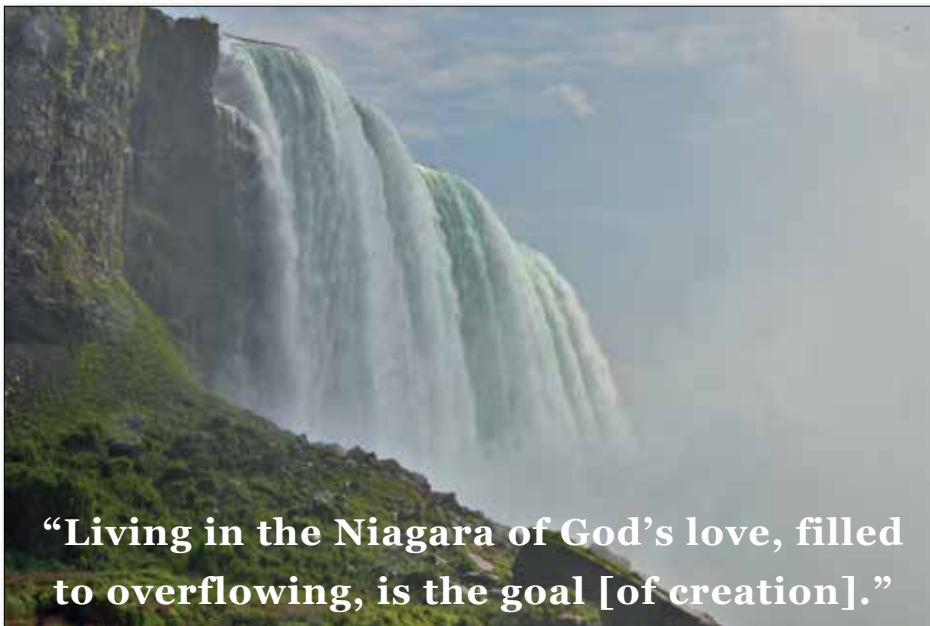
Whoever says, “I have come to know him,” but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word,

truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, “I abide in him,” ought to walk just as he walked. (1 John 2:4–6 NRS)

Do you see what a remarkable thing John is saying? He is saying two things. First, he is saying that the goal toward which we are being called, *and which may be achieved*, is a complete “love of God.” Now notice a linguistic ambiguity here. Is “God” the subject or the object of that prepositional phrase? Is it our love for God that is being brought to completion, or is it God’s love for us (and for others through us)? I think it is both. This is what you and I were created for: to experience the love of God, to be bathed in it, and being bathed in it, to have gallons and gallons to give away.

That is the first thing he says. The second is that we cannot reach that goal, that blessed abiding, unless we “walk” like God walks. That is, we must share his character. That expectation is as old as Sinai. What did God say was the eight-word

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“Living in the Niagara of God’s love, filled to overflowing, is the goal [of creation].”

The Limits of Science

By Fred Heeren



Science writer Fred Heeren has been published in *Nature*, *Scientific American*, *The Smithsonian*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and others. His book *Show Me God: What the Message from Space Is Telling Us about God* (Day Star Publications, 1997) explores the origins of the universe by interviewing some of the most eminent astronomers and cosmologists of our day. Among many topics treated,

Heeren explores the limits of science. Abridged and slightly edited, this article is taken from pages 88–90, 116–122.

This is not rocket science. This is common sense, and no one has ever observed an exception. Even Julie Andrews sings about it: “Nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could.” That every effect must have a cause is a self-evident truth, not only for those who have been trained in logic, but for thinking people everywhere. The cosmological argument for God is founded upon the old Latin axiom, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*: From nothing, nothing comes. A series of causes cannot be infinite. There must have been a first cause, which itself is uncaused. The universe cannot explain itself. This is the first thing the discoveries of the 20th century cosmology suggest about the universe’s greatest mystery, the greatest whodunit of all time: it was an outside job.

Science provides just two fundamental alternatives for the formative history of the universe – either it has always been here, or it began at some point in the past – but neither gives an explanation for ultimate origins. Both explanations fail to answer the greatest question of all: Where did matter and energy come from?

Those scientists who claim that science tells them something about ultimate origins are not being quite honest, be they atheists or creationists. It is perfectly ethical for a scientist or anyone else to state his metaphysical opinions about what caused or didn’t cause the universe. But it is wrong for anyone to say that science has provided him with the information, or for a scientist/celebrity to use his platform as a scientist to imply that science tells us anything about it.

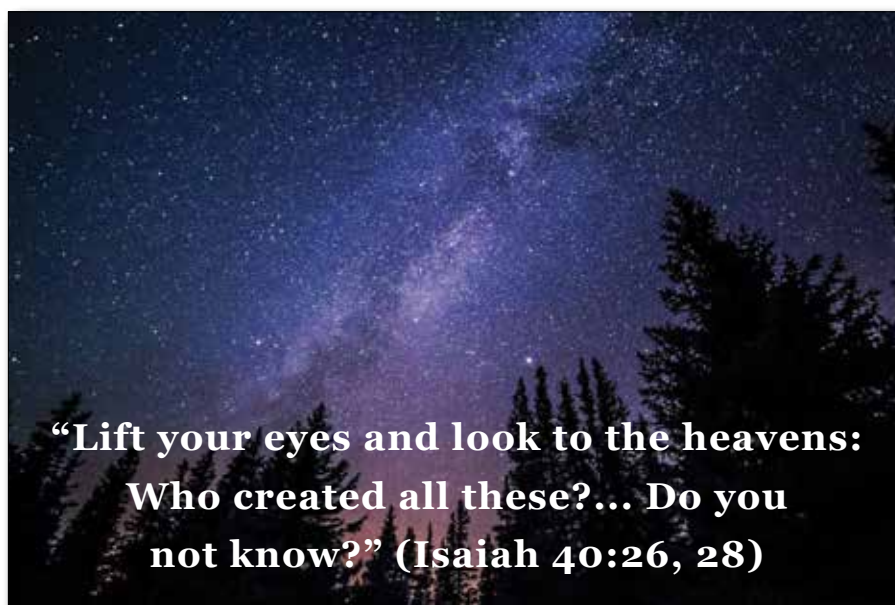
Yet famed Cornell astronomer Carl Sagan confidently claims, “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” After Sagan opened his book (and his television series) with those words, in all the pages (and hours) following, he gave no scientific reasons for making such a statement. In all his discussions of the big bang, he offered no theory to justify his faith in a cosmos that can explain its own existence. Sagan apparently mistakes the limitations of science for the limitations of reality. Science can’t discover what happened before the

big bang; therefore, he seems to reason, nothing could have happened before the big bang.

As it enters the 21st century, science has yet to come up with a natural explanation for the universe’s origin, and it would seem that the supernatural explanation given in Hebrews 11:3 is still the best one we have: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Clearly this kind of faith is at least as reasonable as any theory science can offer.

Those scientists who have been honest about the question of where matter and energy originated have admitted two things: first, that the problem is impossible to solve through science, and second, that this state of affairs is exceedingly frustrating to the scientist.

Internationally respected astronomer (and self-confessed agnostic) Robert Jastrow admits that scientists have been “traumatized” by coming up against a problem that must forever remain beyond them. The situation violates a deeply held “religious faith” of scientists in science itself, the belief that science should eventually be able to discover the forces and laws to explain everything. But Jastrow candidly admits that the universe began “under circumstances that seem to make it impossible—not just now, but ever—to find out what force or forces brought the world



into being at that moment.”

Anticipating all such questions about the unknowable moment of creation, Isaiah tells us that no one can fathom the understanding of the Creator. But as to who or what is the cause for this effect, the Bible raises the question, Shouldn’t we have known that answer all along? “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?... Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator....” (Isa. 40:26a, 28a).

After considering the discovery that our universe had a beginning and that science is incapable of ever discovering what went before, astronomer Jastrow concludes:

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance, he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries. ✠

What the Whole World Is Waiting For

By N. T. Wright



Bible scholar, Anglican churchman, and author, N. T. Wright talks about the future of the cosmos in his book *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (Harper Collins, 2008). The following article, abridged and slightly edited, is taken from chapter 6: “What the Whole World’s Waiting For” (91–108).

The early Christians did not believe in progress. They did not think the world was getting better and better under its own steam—or even under the steady influence of God. They knew God had to do something fresh to put it to rights. But neither did they believe that the world was getting worse and worse and that their task was to escape it altogether. They were not dualists.

Since most people who think about these things today tend toward one or other of those two points of view, it comes as something of a surprise to discover that the early Christians held a quite different view. They believed that God was going to do for the whole cosmos what he had done for Jesus at Easter. The clearest statements of the large-scale Christian hope are found in the New Testament, in Paul and in the book of Revelation. Let us look at some of those texts.

In 1 Corinthians 15:28 we find Paul declaring that as the goal of all history, God will be “everything in everything,” or if you like, “all in all.” This is one of the clearest statements of the very center of the future-oriented New Testament worldview. God intends in the end to fill all creation with his own presence and love. A future glimpse of what this will be like is provided in Isaiah. In chapter 11, anticipating the “new creation” passage in chapters 65 and 66, the prophet declares that “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9 KJV). That is a remarkable statement. It looks as though God intends to flood the universe with himself, as though the universe, the entire cosmos, was designed as a receptacle for his love.

This brings us to Romans 8, where we find a further image deeply embedded within the created order itself: that of new birth. This passage has routinely been marginalized for centuries by exegetes and theologians who have tried to turn Romans into a book simply about how individual sinners get

individually saved. But it is in fact one of the great climaxes of the letter and indeed of all Paul’s thought.

In this passage Paul again uses the imagery of the Exodus from Egypt but this time in relation not to Jesus, nor even to ourselves, but to creation as a whole. Creation, he says (v. 21) is in slavery at the moment, like the children of Israel. God’s design was to rule creation in life-giving wisdom through his image-bearing human creatures. But this was always a promise for the future, a promise that one day the true human being, the image of God himself, God’s incarnate son, would come to lead the human race into their true identity. Meanwhile, the creation was subjected to futility, to transience and decay,

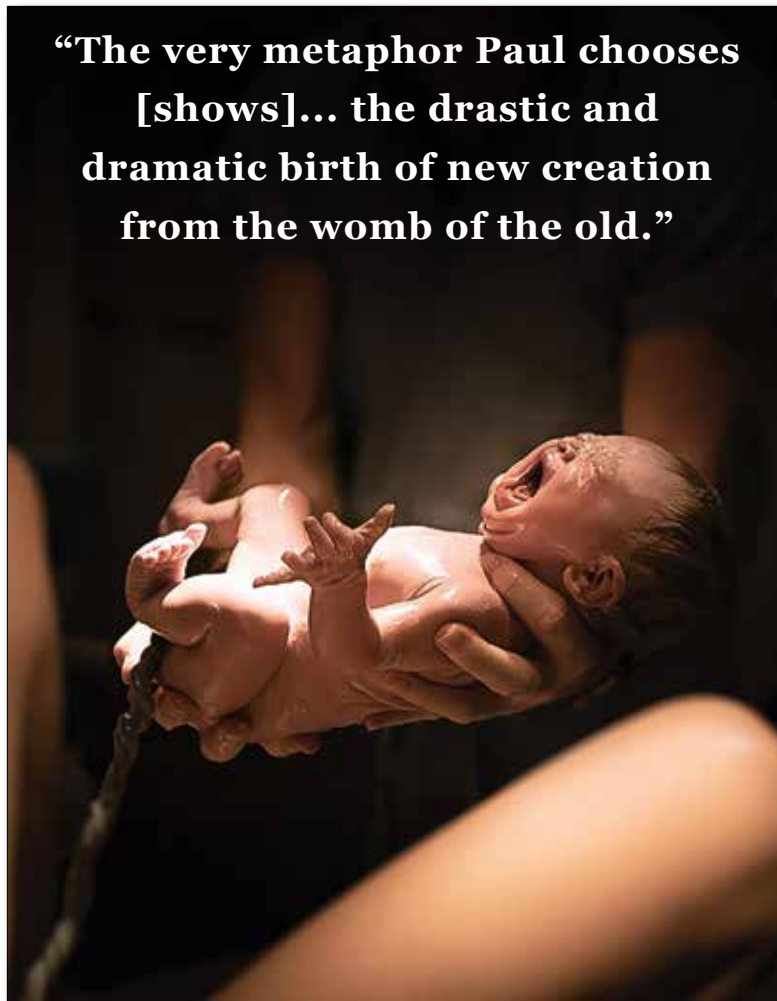
until the time when God’s children are glorified, when what happened to Jesus at Easter happens to all Jesus’s people. This is where Romans 8 dovetails with 1 Corinthians 15. The whole creation, as he says in verse 19, is on tiptoe with expectation, longing for the day when God’s children are revealed, when their resurrection will herald its own new life.

Paul then uses the image of birth pangs—a well-known Jewish metaphor for the emergence of God’s new age—not only of the church in verse 23 and of the Spirit a couple of verses later but also here in verse 22 of creation itself. Once again, this highlights both the continuity and discontinuity. This is no smooth evolutionary transition, in which creation simply moves up another gear into a higher mode of life. This is traumatic, involving convulsions and contractions and the radical discontinuity in which mother and child are

parted and become not one being but two. But neither is this a dualistic rejection of physicality as though, because the present creation is transient and full of decay and death, God must throw it away and start again from scratch. The very metaphor Paul chooses for this decisive moment in his argument shows that what he has in mind is not the unmaking of creation or simply its steady development but the drastic and dramatic birth of new creation from the womb of the old.

We thus arrive at the last and perhaps the greatest image of new creation, of cosmic renewal, in the whole Bible: Revelation 21–22. This time the image is that of marriage. The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband.

“The very metaphor Paul chooses [shows]... the drastic and dramatic birth of new creation from the womb of the old.”



Continued on page 11

God Is the Source of Light. The sequence of days begins with, “And God said, ‘Let there be light.’” In the New Testament, Paul draws an analogy between this statement and the proclamation of the Christian message: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul uses creation as a metaphor for what happens to a person at conversion. The gospel effects an actual spiritual transformation, as Paul goes on to say in the very next chapter, again using the language of creation: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). It is for this reason that we can have confidence in the Christian message—it brings real illumination, authenticating itself in human experience. It also authenticates itself intellectually, as C. S. Lewis pointed out: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else” (*The Weight of Glory*).

The Goodness of Creation. One cannot read Genesis 1 without noticing the constant refrain, “And God saw that it was good” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), culminating in the final assessment on day six: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (1:31). How different from pantheistic philosophies that regarded matter as essentially evil and held that our wisdom would be to escape from it completely! The fact that God has put human beings in charge of a good creation reminds us also of our responsibility towards God as stewards of creation. It is not our property, but God’s, and we are not at liberty to abuse, waste, and ruin it. Indeed, God takes our attitude to the earth very seriously, as a day will come in which God will judge those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18). ✠

worship experience. But I also found myself repenting. Creation was doing a better job proclaiming God’s glory than I was. A deep desire was growing within me to become more like those rocks, joining them in continuous worship and praise of my Creator and Redeemer. Tears again came to my eyes as I quietly sang[†]:

*If the stars were made to worship so will I
If the mountains bow in reverence so will I
If the oceans roar Your greatness so will I
For if everything exists to lift You high so will I*

*If the wind goes where You send it so will I
If the rocks cry out in silence so will I
If the sum of all our praises still falls shy
Then we’ll sing again a hundred billion times*

*If You gladly chose surrender so will I
I can see Your heart eight billion different ways
Every precious one a child You died to save
If You gave Your life to love them so will I. ✠*

† Hillsong United lyrics. “So Will I” (2018). Michael Fatkin, Benjamin Hastings, Joel Houston.

Has Genesis Been Hijacked? *continued from page 5*

grammatical analysis of Genesis, or are we more beholden to ever-shifting genetic theories?

4. EC apologists are fuzzy about where straightforward history begins in the Bible. Is it at Genesis 12? The post-exilic period? In inviting us to take Genesis 1–11 as less than fully historical, EC must clarify for us what genre it is. Myth? If the spicket of biblical minimalism is turned on, precisely who or what decides when it is to be shut off?
5. The living beings “created” in Genesis 1 were not fashioned in a “temporally immediate” manner. Naïve literalism like this, or even considering a “talking snake,” is best kept in Vacation Bible School and must not trespass on our top-tier evangelical campuses.
6. The consensual EC view is that Adam and Eve’s sin (if historical) only ushered in *spiritual* death. In other words, human physical death is not linked to Adam’s sin. The curse brought no changes to the cosmos, or at least none that science could detect. The “thorns and thistles” of Genesis 3:16 therefore existed long before the Fall, as did pain, bloodshed, extinctions, cancer, and pretty much every other natural evil that we presently observe.

Do you see why EC is so enticing? A patina of evangelicalism is kept, but we are saved the embarrassment of going against the grain of the prevailing scientific orthodoxy. But a risky precedent has been set. If the Pentateuch must be read through

“Could not the serpent’s strategy that wooed Eve to mistrust God’s Word also beguile some of our academicians today?”



the lens of methodological naturalism, how long before we are also asked to handle Paul’s writings in a more “scientifically responsible manner”? When considering the “the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world,*” paleo-orthodoxy has always connected Calvary to something that really happened in Genesis. How then do we think we can tinker with that “something” and not impact our soteriology?

In the 1970s, when inerrancy was dying the death of a thousand qualifications, some warned that the next dominoes to topple would relate to Genesis and gender. Looking at the extreme fuzzification on gender and marriage issues today, we must ask whether our modern views of Genesis are partly to blame! If the bugle of Genesis blows such an uncertain sound, how can we possibly prepare for any cultural battle? In allowing Genesis to be weighed in the scales of modernity’s great creation myth, rather than vice versa, this may prove to be one of Satan’s most effective and costly hijackings. ✠

God Plus Nothing

By Dennis F. Kinlaw (1922–2017)



Evangelist, pastor, Hebrew scholar, college president, and co-founder of the Francis Asbury Society, Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw was eminently qualified to speak about creation as portrayed in Genesis. This article is a condensation of the first in a series of chapel messages Dr. Kinlaw gave at Asbury College in 1973. Almost fifty years later, these messages continue to speak to the hearts and minds of those who heard them.

I want to deal with some basic issues of Christianity that are being lost in contemporary society and lost out of the church. Many of the basic ideas in the Gospel of Christ have been lost to us, and because of this, I would like to take Genesis 1–3 as the background for our thinking and point out some things about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It may be that once I address them, you will think, “Well, that is obvious.” It is very seldom that we take the obvious things and follow them through logically; often we agree to something without letting the truth of it penetrate our lives, our actions, or our intellects.

When we seek after the truth, we find that the Holy Spirit begins to make us whole. We may try to flip backwards, and sin may fragment us, but it will not fragment us long. The truth will set us free. Now when we come to Genesis 1–3, we most often get lost in the question of science. Science is not inconsequential, but science is not the point of Genesis 1–3; the writers of Genesis knew nothing of science as an intellectual discipline. I remember a lecturer who spoke on Genesis 1–3, and after listening to his three-hour lectures, I came away with more knowledge of science than I did of Genesis. I am going to spend very little time on the questions of science, even though when you come to these chapters, most people want to know about evolution and the relationship between faith and science.

Now I am interested in this, and one of the things that I want to say very explicitly is that Genesis 1–3 will tell you things that science cannot tell you anything about. The basic thrust of Genesis 1–3 is to give us life answers: theological, philosophical, and religious—but not scientific or naturalistic. What is the primary thing that Genesis tells us? First, here as nowhere else in scripture, the deity and sovereignty of God are very clearly illustrated. And I think this is very important, especially today. One of the things that is surprising when you begin to study this passage, is that if you have grown up as a Christian and been in Sunday School, you take everything here for granted. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Any child

understands that. That is what I thought. They taught me that in Sunday School, so it was never any problem for me to believe that in the beginning there was *God plus nothing*. One day, God spoke and acted, and then there was *God plus something else*.

However, this is the most sophisticated, intellectual concept that the human mind has ever entertained. Even Aristotle could not think this thought. If you study the history of human ideas, you will find that the simple statement in Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning, God created...*” cannot be found anywhere else in any of the literature of the world unless the Bible has already been there. Humans are fearful creatures, and Christianity comes along and says that God is good and God is all-powerful. God created the world out of nothing. God is in control, and so humans do not have to be afraid of the future, or of fate, or of forces in or outside of nature. Humanity does not have to be afraid of the cemetery, nor the oceans, nor outer space.



The concept of God who is not a part of nature, not dependent upon anything, totally self-contained, so that he needs nothing to exist, is based on the doctrine of the Trinity. The basis of the doctrine of the Trinity is found right here in Genesis 1–3. Most people who point to the Trinity in Genesis 1–2 pick out the passage that says, “Let us make man in our own image.” This statement by

God does not necessarily mean the Trinity at all, but it *does* mean that there was enough multiplicity in God’s nature to let us know that his basic character is social. God existed alone in the beginning, yet because of his triune character, love existed within his being. God could not *be* love if he were simply one. You must have somebody to love, to show love, to be loved. Here is this beginning and the basis of all that is to come in terms of understanding the Trinity.

What is the triune God’s will for his creation? Simply *happy holiness*. If you would rather turn it around, it is *holy happiness*. That is what life is supposed to be! Genesis 1–2 is the foundation. We can trust God. This is the reason that the Christian can look at the world in hope even with all its evils and say, “It is not supposed to be that way. Let’s go straighten it out.” This is the reason a Christian can look at a person who is lost and suffering from addictions and say, “We are not supposed to be enslaved. Let’s go see how we can help.” We have One who made us for himself and for each other, so we have an obligation to step in and give our lives to help one another. ✨

unambiguous, verbal message from God contained in the Law and the Prophets (vv. 7–11). Here, in the words of Scripture, David learns precious truths that the cosmos could never teach him: God is one, personal, transcendent, all-powerful, and loving; he has a name, and invites us to know him. He commands us to be holy. Yes, in the Bible God reveals the truth about himself, the world, who we are, and the meaning of life.

Notice the plethora of *adjectives* David uses to describe God’s written Word. In contrast to the incomplete message that comes to us through nature, the message in Scripture is “perfect,” “sure,” “right,” “pure,” “clean,” “true,” “enduring,” “desirable,” “sweet,” and “righteous altogether.” But it is in David’s choice of *verbs* that we begin to understand the real impact of God’s written Word. It “revives” the soul, “makes wise” the simple, “rejoices” the heart, “enlightens” the eyes, “warns” of danger, and “brings great reward” (vv. 7–11). Yes, the heavens declare the glory of God, but if you want to know more, you will need his written Word.

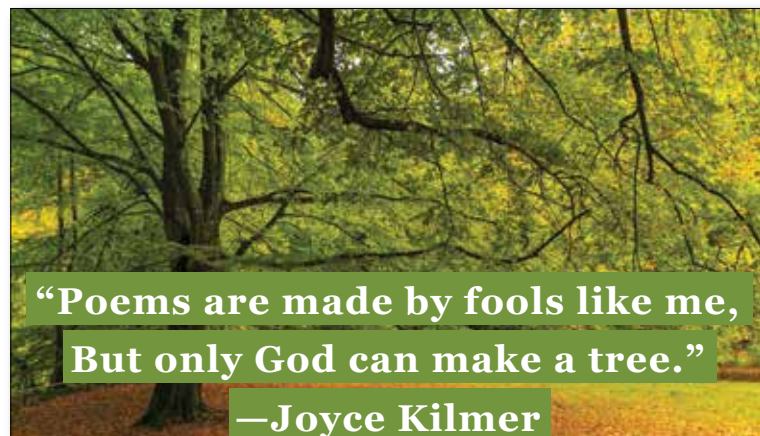
We can feel the intensity building in David’s worship as he transitions from the majestic grandeur of the heavens to the authoritative certainty of the Scriptures. But David is not yet ready to give the benediction. As a member of God’s covenant family, his worship has prepared him to receive and believe the truth about himself: who he is because of sin and what he can become because of grace.

*Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.*

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
(Psalm 19:12–14)*

This issue of *The High Calling* is devoted to the doctrine of creation. As evangelical Christians, we sometimes focus so much on Calvary and Pentecost that we neglect the vital importance of what God has to say to us through the cosmos. David’s example of worship in Psalm 19 shows us how God’s non-verbal Word in nature sends us to his written Word in Scripture, which in turn leads us to his incarnate Word, Jesus Christ “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

Now, I think we are ready for the benediction! ✨



We notice right away how drastically different this is from all those would-be Christian scenarios in which the end of the story is the Christian going off to heaven as a soul, naked and unadorned, to meet its maker in fear and trembling. As in Philippians 3, it is not we who go to heaven, it is heaven that comes to earth; indeed, it is the church itself, the heavenly Jerusalem, that comes down to earth. This is the ultimate rejection of all types of Gnosticism, of every worldview that sees the final goal as a separation of the world from God, of the physical from the spiritual, of earth from heaven. It is the final answer to the Lord’s Prayer, that God’s kingdom will come, and his will be done on earth as in heaven. It is what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 1:10, that God’s design, and promise, was to sum up all things in Christ, things both in heaven and on earth. It is the final fulfillment, in richly symbolic imagery, of the promise of Genesis 1, that the creation of male and female would together reflect God’s image in the world. And it is the final accomplishment of God’s great design, to defeat and abolish death forever—which can only mean the rescue of creation from its present plight of decay.

Heaven and earth, it seems, are not after all poles apart, needing to be separated forever when all the children of heaven have been rescued from this wicked earth. Nor are they simply different ways of looking at the same thing, as would be implied by some kinds of pantheism. No, they are different, radically different, but they are made for each other in the same way (Revelation is suggesting) as male and female. And when they finally come together, that will be cause for rejoicing in the same way that a wedding is: a creational sign that God’s project is going forward; that opposite poles with creation are made for union, not competition; that love and not hate has the last word in the universe; that fruitfulness and not sterility is God’s will for creation.

As I reflect on God’s future plans for the world, I am reminded of the great teacher and pastor Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. Someone once asked him whether, as he looked to the future, he was optimistic or pessimistic. His reply was simple and characteristic. “I am,” he said, “neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!” This chapter is a way of saying amen to that. The whole world is waiting, on tiptoe with expectation, for the moment when that resurrection life and power sweeps through it, filling it with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. ✨

Creation and God’s Goal *continued from page 6*

summation of all the expectations of the covenant he graciously offered the Hebrew people? “You must be holy as I am holy.” What did it mean to treat your indentured servants as people and not as objects? To be holy as he is holy. What did it mean not to let your mean ox go untethered? To be holy as he is holy. What did it mean to take care of a widow? To be holy as he is holy. Et cetera!

Am I saying that holy character is the goal of creation? Actually, I am not saying that. I am saying that living in the Niagara of God’s love, filled to overflowing, is the goal. That is why God made you, to abide in his love. *But*, how can you and I ever experience that love and give it away if we will not submit to be made like him? Is holiness the goal of creation? No. But we will never reach his ultimate goal unless we fall on our faces once and always, crying in the words of the hymn-writer Thomas Chisholm, “Oh to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer.” ✨

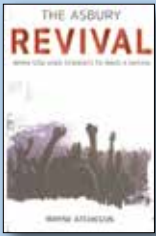


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By Thomas H. McCall

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By Wayne Atcheson

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This Is My Father's World

By Maltbie D. Babcock (1901)

*This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—
His hand the wonders wrought.*

*This is my Father's world:
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world:
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.*

*This is my Father's world:
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King: let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let earth be glad!*

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