

The Beauteous World As Made By Him

He was in the world, and the world was made by him,

And the world knew him not.

John 1.10

The Gospel of John is so profound and highly packed with truth that I would affront the spirit of the truth if I were to hurry through it. The phrase, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him and the world knew him not” (John 1.10) cannot be rushed without dire consequences.

The pronoun “him” refers to that which is spoken of in John 1.1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And in verse 10, “He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.” All this refers to pre-incarnation times and does not refer to the coming of Christ at Bethlehem, but the world of humanity from the beginning.

We have the “Word” and the “world” related in this prologue as cause and effect. The “world” is always an effect, the “Word” is always a cause, and there never is any time when the world is a cause, and there never is any time when the Word is an effect. The “Word” was and the “Word” made the “world.” The *logos* (in English, the “Word”) made the world, and we will stay by it. So the “Word” and the “world.” The world you see round about you did not come into existence of itself but is an effect of that which the Bible calls the Word.

The word “world” needs a bit of definition, so I want to mention that the word “world” has three meanings in the Bible, only two of which concern us now. The third one means ages, but the prologue is not concerned with the ages as such. The prologue uses the word “world” in two of its meanings: nature and humanity. And it is the very same Greek word in both cases and used together without clear distinction; so when the Bible says, “He was in the world and the world knew him not,” you have two meanings of the word “world,” and the context has to tell you which meaning it is, because it is a precise word in the original.

“World” as Nature

The word “world” comes from a root meaning; “to tend and to take care of and to provide for.” This is obvious just from reading the Scriptures, even if we never looked in any Greek lexicon. It also means an orderly arrangement, plus decoration.

Orderly

To the casual observer the world around us is an orderly world. I do not think I am too wrong in referring to it as the monotony of order. Anyone can see that day follows night, winter follows summer and there has been no change since the beginning of time. God’s world is a world that is orderly. This monotony of order is quite crucial to everything in nature. Without it all of nature would crumble in a pile of chaos.

A world of uncertainty would be uncharacteristic of God, for the Scriptures clearly state, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14.33). Wherever you see confusion, you can be sure that something is wrong. Disorder in the world implies that something is out of place. Usually, at the heart of all disorder you will find man in rebellion against God. It began in the Garden of Eden and continues to this day.

All of nature has come to expect from God a sense of orderliness. Whatever God does carries with it His fingerprint. And in the world around us His fingerprint of orderliness is evident to anybody who is honest with the facts. If you look at nature, you will discover a mathematical exactness. Without this precision, the entire world would be in utter confusion. One plus one always equals two no matter what part of the universe you happen to be in. And the laws of nature operate in beautiful harmony, a harmony that is ordered by God Himself.

Beautiful

Not only would we expect God to make an orderly world that operates in perfect harmony, but also a beautiful world. And it is not too difficult to see that the world around us is full of beauty. When we look at the world, especially from that point of view, we cannot help but wonder at the marvelous beauty of God’s creation. It brought to me a sense of awesome appreciation of God’s creative prowess.

The hymn writers of the church have done a magnificent job of reminding us of God’s beautiful creation. The words to “For the Beauty of the Earth” by Folliot Sanford Pierpont (1835-1917) express this very thing:

For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

The hymn writer was putting in melodious language a truth that God made the world beautiful in its order.

The reason God created the world as beautiful as it is, was to please Himself. Everything He created brought pleasure to Him in some way. We read of this in Revelation 4.11; “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

When we see any beauty, we must understand that it is simply being what it was created to be. God did not make anything ugly. I know that there are some strange creatures out in the world, but each one brings a certain degree of pleasure to the Creator. He created all of this for His delight. We can only imagine the enjoyment God gets out of some of the things that I have seen.

There is an old saying that we hear often: “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Could I be so bold as to change that a little bit and make it more biblically correct? “Beauty is in the eye of the Creator.” That makes more sense to me. I have seen babies with a face only a mother could love. I don’t say anything, because every baby is beautiful to its parents. Why? Well the answer is obvious. The parents see something of themselves in that little bundle

When we come to God and His outlook on the world around us, what He sees is beautiful. The reason is simple. Everything God created, He created with purpose, and that purpose brings pure pleasure to Him. God looks at His marvelous creation and, in a sense sees Himself.

When we think of something ugly, we think of something that is really out of place. And although, for the time being, there are some things in this world out of place and therefore ugly, God, who created all things, will make sure all things come back to their created purpose.

Every artist is in love with his creation because he puts something of himself into it. Others may not appreciate the beauty, but the artist sees what others may not see—what he intended to create.

The reason things are as out of place as they are is because of sin. When God created man and put him in the garden, everything was perfect. There was not a bit of ugliness

anywhere to be found. And God looked at everything and pronounced, "it is good." The world God created, and the world in which God placed man, was perfect and good. It brought great delight and pleasure to the Creator.

Sin brought in disorder; and in that disorder was ugliness. It was a revolt against God and His creative purpose. To restore the beauty of God's world, God sent the Redeemer to put all things back to its creative purpose. Only the redeemed have the ability to like what God likes and to be pleased with what pleases God.

In the untouched beauty and majesty of God's creation, we begin to understand God's great appreciation of things beautiful. Only man's touch on God's creation taints it with ugliness.

Utilitarian

God's world is orderly and decorative, but it is also utilitarian. In examining God's creation, one simple thought I have is that nothing was made on whimsy. God is not like the man who does things impulsively and then later has reason to regret what he has done. I have done things and later have come to regret them and found that there is no practical use whatsoever for what I have done.

Not so with God. Everything God does has purpose and intention behind that design. It is a master design and every little thing has its proper place and function.

Just because I, finite man, do not understand everything that God, the finite, does is no reason to doubt God's purpose. I may go into someone's workshop and see all the tools and gadgets that are important to the man's work. I may see laying on the table, for instance, a little tool that I can make nothing of and have no understanding of its purpose. But in the hands of the craftsman, that little tool has a well-defined purpose and does what it is supposed to do.

Just because the man's worktable looks cluttered and as if everything is out of place does not mean in his mind there is not order and purpose. In the same regard, I am not going to accuse God of creating a lot of unnecessary things that have no purpose in God's total scheme of things, just because I don't understand them.

I give you that it is sometimes difficult to find the utilitarian purpose of something. My father, for example, could not understand the purpose behind the mosquito. As far as he was concerned, it was an annoying little insect and had no purpose whatsoever. Yet I believe that everything has a well-defined purpose in God's creation. I may not understand it at the time,

and it may look like something completely out of place with no purpose at all, but everything God does has at its very foundation a utilitarian.

In the first part of the book of Genesis, we see that utility was God's first plan. God said, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1.3). And God saw that it was good, it had a purpose, and He divided the light from the darkness. The purpose of that was for utility. God called the light day and the darkness He called night. And everything we read in the first several chapters of Genesis show us a beautiful exercise in utility. God was making an orderly world for a purpose, giving a reason for its existence.

We must take this aspect of God's character and bring it over to the subject of men and women. This is exactly how people function. In the founding of our great country, the pioneers traveled west and hewed out for themselves homes. The first great purpose of those homes was utility. They were nothing to look at but were a shelter from the inclement elements. They served the purpose. And as it is everywhere, usefulness always comes first. That which God creates first has a utilitarian aspect to it. It has a specific purpose.

Decorative

After God created everything, He crowned it with His proclamation, "It is good." And to whom was it good? Simply put, what God saw was good in His own eyes. Not only did it have a utilitarian purpose, but it also was decorative. It not only satisfied His requirements for order and usefulness, but it was also well pleasing to His eye. First, God made a thing useful, and then He added decoration.

Something can be useful and look ugly. We can get some work out of it, but it still can be an awful-looking thing when it comes to aesthetics. God decorates everything He does with a wonderful sense of beauty. Everything God does is pleasing to His eye.

When God made His universe, it was just as easy for Him to make it lovely as it was to make it homely. Of course, it would have been useful even if the clouds above were square and painted battleship gray. They would be useful but they would never be nice to look at, and nobody would ever write a sonnet to a square cloud painted battleship gray. But the poets have written sonnets of the beautiful fleecy clouds that float in the blue sky above.

Why did God make the sky blue when any old color would do? God said, "That was a lovely color, wasn't it?" He liked it. He had something in Him that liked it. Then He made you and me, and there is something in us that likes it too.

In creation, God could have made a straight, plain, ugly-looking thing and called it a river. It would have worked, fed the fish and done all the things a river could do. But God in His

gracious wisdom took His finger and traced the path of the river and allowed it to run around the tree and around the hills and down through a valley. He then surrounded it with beautiful trees, bushes and flowers. He also permitted it to catch the blue of the sky and reflect it as a beautiful mirror.

Utility is one thing and beauty is another, but God is able to make things both useful and beautiful. That is what the word “world” means.

“World” as Humanity

The first use of the word “world” is nature, and we can see how God filled it with His presence. The second use of “world” is humanity. This does not refer to the clouds, the hills or the rocks in the rivers, but to the entire world of organized, fallen humanity. It is for this “world” that God sent His Son to redeem.

Before Christ came into the world, the world was a Shekinah of the Word, the all-permeating Word and will of God moving through His universe. And when Jesus Christ became incarnate in human body, He did not cease to be the all-permeating Word filling the universe and moving among us. He did not cease to be what He was and always will be.

Now He is among us. He is the light “which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1.9). He now has come among the world of humanity.

Listen to this: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1.16). The all-permeating Word, which is in the world, is the adhesive quality of the universe. That is why we do not fall apart. He is to the universe the mortar and the magnetism that holds it together. He holds up His universe. That is what He is doing in His universe. That is why He is here. This is not a dead world that we inhabit. Only sin is the dead thing. This is a living world that we inhabit, a spiritual world, held together by the spiritual presence of the invisible Word.

What is He doing? “Who bring the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1.3).

Why doesn't this world of ours just fall apart? What is it that holds everything together? Why doesn't the entire universe disintegrate into chaotic nothingness? The reason is there is a presence making all things consist, and there is One upholding all things by the word of His power. Man in all of his educated smugness thinks he has the universe all figured out. He

thinks he has boiled everything down to a scientific formula that he can prove or disprove whenever he chooses. The universe is in his hands. But this universe and all of nature are completely within the hands of God who is holding it all together.

It is of my distinct opinion that only spiritual laws can explain this universe. This is a spiritual world, which is why the scientist never manages to get through to the root of things. The educated scientist deals only with things he can see and touch and taste and experiment with, but he does not know why they hold together. He mixes two chemicals together and a certain action takes place, and he writes about it and says, "Where is God?" God is making you do that. God is holding it together. The scientist says that a star in 2,510 years and 20 minutes will be in such and such a position. Then he says, "Now, I have done it. I have run God out of His world and I can predict where the stars will be." The scientist acts as though he has put those stars in the sky. Foolish man. The stars would never be anything but dust except God runs the whole show and did the whole business. God upholds all things by the word of His power.

What is God doing in His universe, this present, permeating *Logos*? "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. 40.26). This is one of the most beautiful figures of speech in the entire Bible. I believe it is a companion piece to Psalm 23, only astronomical in place of dealing with human beings. The man of God said, "Lift up your eyes upon high and behold who has created these things."

What things? These shining, bright diamond objects that look down upon the country and the city, their light reflecting off of the still water of the sea. Those stars embedded deep in the sky above. Who created those stars that bring out their host by number? Why do they bring out their host? To change the figure of speech a little, they are like sheep, and this is a figure of a shepherd bringing his sheep out by number and calling them all by name. Counting them as they come out, naming every one of them and leading them across the green grass of the meadows and beside the still waters. The shepherd-minded poet Isaiah saw the starry host above like a flock of sheep, and God, the great shepherd, called them as they came sailing out through interstellar space as He numbered them and said they are all here and then called them by their names. And because He is strong in power, not one fails.

This is the most majestic and elevated figure of speech in the entire Bible, with no possible exception. We can look into the starry sky and know that astronomers have told us that the very Milky Way is not a milky way at all but simply a confusion of stars so many billions of light years away, all moving in an orderly direction. God called them all out and He knows their number and calls them all by name, just as a shepherd calls his sheep.

A Presence and a Light

In our country, we have a tradition of believing that there is a divine law in this world. Benjamin Franklin, who was not what we would call a fundamentalist Christian, suggested that when the Congress was in a tight spot, they should drop everything and have prayer. Many of them were really not Christians, but they believed in God. They believed there was a God in this world and that there was a divine law in the world. This was the foundation of our country.

Although our founding fathers were not fundamental Christians, and many of them were not born again, most of them held a reverent and profound belief in the presence of God in this world. All of the laws and rules and regulations that have come down to us from them came from men who believed there was a God. That did not save them, but it made them a lot different from many today who scoff at the idea of God. Today in Washington and in other places there are those whose idea of God is so cynical that they might toss God somewhere in their speeches but their entire life is lived as though He didn't really exist.

When you get up in the morning, here is a presence, and you do not feel it. There is a light, and you do not see it. You get up in the morning, and there is a voice, but you cannot hear it, and then you say, "Don't preach to me, go preach to the down-and-outers on skid row." Don't you know that before the great bar of God, your sin is deeper than the drug addict laying in the cool of the ally in some gutter?

Others are addicted to pleasure and give themselves to the pleasures of the flesh—anything to take the seriousness out of living. Anything to keep from knowing that there is a presence. Anything to keep from knowing there is a light and a voice.

You may dress in expensive suits and drive the latest automobile; your home may be more than you can really afford and not one thing in it more than one year old. You may have promotions coming up and expect to make good in this world. But you are a profane man until you have awakened to the fact that you are not alone in this universe, but He is here. That there is presence and a voice that lights every man, and you realize the basis of your life is not physical but spiritual, and you owe it to God to turn to Him with all your heart.

It is a tremendous thought that when our Lord wanted to point to the most dangerous trap of all, He did not mention the wicked things. He said the most dangerous trap is just living and forgetting that God exists.

This is what is wrong with America. Any kind of sin will damn any man that does not get free from it by the blood of the Lamb.

It is noteworthy that Jesus Christ specializes in talking about these innocent things that are all right in themselves, but when we get absorbed in them to the point where there is a presence and we cannot feel Him, a voice and we cannot hear Him, a light and we cannot see Him, then we are profane men."Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it" (Job 3.3-4).

The only scripture for that profane man who has forgotten Jesus Christ exists is, "He was in the world and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1.10). The man has a responsibility to God—God made him; he is an effect, not a cause, an effect of a cause. And he is in the hand of God, if he only knew it. God will send him into hell because he has forgotten that there is a God. He gives lip service to the church and mental service to religion, but he is a profane man because he cannot see the presence or the light or hear the voice that says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11.28).

I can but offer my own personal testimony. As a 17-year old ignorant boy walking the streets of east Akron, I wandered into a church and heard a man say, , "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11.28-29).

I did not have any biblical background whatsoever. I basically, was nothing more than a pagan; but when I heard those words, I was disturbed to my very soul. I began to feel a presence. I began to think I heard a voice and dimly saw a light. Although I was still a lost pagan, I was getting close. Jesus said, "Thou are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12.34).

It was not long after that, when walking down Market Street, that I came to Case Avenue at the bottom of a hill and saw a street preacher. I can still see him in my mind. He was German, and spoke with a strong German accent and had a berry colored birthmark disfiguring the side of his face. He was not much to look at but what he said burned deep into my heart: "If you don't know how to pray, go home and pray 'God have mercy on me a sinner.'" Do you know what? I did it. I got into my father's house and got my feet under the table.

Just get down on your knees. There is an awful lot you do not need to know to find God. The light shineth, the voice calleth, and the Presence is here. All of this came to a head when Scripture says, "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and, "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1.14); so He's here now. He went away in His human body, but His everlasting all-permeating Word is with us still.

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