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Coop's Column- All Your Wondrous Works Proclaim

With so much around us to invite our curiosity and to evoke our wonder, a bored attitude toward life is sinful. A day's adventure in the world ought to end, after all, with an exclamation point of thanksgiving to God.

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Rabbi Samuel Dresner once recalled the words of Rabbi Abraham Heschel, spoken to him during his last visit with his dying friend:

“Sam, when I regained consciousness, my first feelings were not of despair or anger. I felt only gratitude to God for my life, for every moment I had lived. I was ready to depart. ‘Take me, O Lord,’ I thought, ‘I have seen so many miracles in my lifetime.’ I prayed: ‘I did not ask for success, I asked for wonder. And you gave it to me.’”

Said John Calvin: “The [natural] world is a theater of God’s glory,” a testimony which echoes the Scriptural witness as found in *The Message* which puts Romans 1: 19-20 like this: “The basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can’t see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being.”

Both the expansiveness and the grandeur of creation’s lavish “theater” invite human curiosity. They tease it forth. How could humans fail to become curious in a universe so chock-full of interesting things to discover and explore? Natively, as it were, they

set their minds whirring—wondering about this and trying to figure out that. What sheer delight—yes, fun!--to be tireless vagabonds, adventurers through life with eyes wide open to wonder.

Child-like curiosity set Philip Yancey to asking some wonder-full questions:

- Why are there so many kinds of animals? Couldn't the world get along with, say, 300,000 species of beetles instead of 500,000?
- Why is it that the most beautiful animals on earth are hidden away from all humans except those wearing elaborate SCUBA equipment? Who are they beautiful for?
- Why are dogs so much easier to train than cats? Why are African elephants almost impossible to train? Are human beings animals? Any they anything but animals? Why aren't human beings easier to train?
- Do gorillas and aardvarks go through a mid-life crisis?
- As Walker Percy asks: "Why does man feel so sad in the 20th century? Why does man feel so bad in the very age when, more than in any other age, he has succeeded in satisfying his needs and making the world over for his own use?"
- Why is almost all religious art realistic, whereas much of God's creation—zebra, swallowtail butterfly, crystalline structure—excels at abstract design?

Adds Yancey: "I was just wondering."

Wonder lay at the heart of English poet William Blake's vision of life:

*To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.*

With so much around us to invite our curiosity and to evoke our wonder, a bored attitude toward life is sinful. A day's adventure in the world ought to end, after all, with an exclamation point of thanksgiving to God.

God's creation is a theater of Divine artistry and power, yes. It is also a cathedral. There God beckons us to become aware of his holiness, to receive his creation's good gifts as sacraments from his

hand, and to bless him for them. Creation, properly received, ought to evoke worship.

Awe and wonder about creation—and worship of its Creator—happen best in company of others. Joy shared is joy multiplied—always.

Where better to rouse one another to joy and delight than “in the sanctuary,” the assembly of God’s people gathered for worship? There our hearts get set right again. In the words of Psalm 73:17 (again, as found in *The Message*), we “get the whole picture.” There our Lord calls us to see creation for what it is: his gift to us. There he bids us—again and yet again—to receive it with child-like reverie. There we can repent for attitudes and times when we’ve smothered wonder and joy. There we can rouse one another to fresh delight. And there we can plead for the dawning of heaven’s coming day when, with saints and angels in swelling chorus, we shall offer our Lord purer thanks and nobler praise—when we’ll become unendingly “lost in wonder, love, and praise.”

Thought

“All around us are incarnations of glory, and all it takes to see them is to say a blessing—for the moment, for God’s gift, for life.” (Jonathan Sacks, *Celebrating Life*)

Prayer

*“O for a thousand tongues to sing
Our great redeemer’s name;
To sing beyond ourselves, extravagantly,
With abandonment,
Beyond all our possibilities,
And all our fears,
And all our hopes....
To our redeemer dear, the antidote to our death,
The salve to our wounds,
The resolve of our destructiveness...*

*A thousand, a million, a trillion tongues,
More than our own,
More than our tradition,*

*More than our theology,
More than our understanding,*

Tongues around us,

Tongues among us,

Tongues from our silenced parts.

Tongues from us to you in freedom and in courage,

Finally ceding our lives and our loves to your good care.

Amen.”

-Walter Brueggeman, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth*,

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