

## Conclusion

*And so I asked you why the blackbird  
Learned the song that he sings  
And why the butterfly  
wears colours on her wings  
And you told me it was your desire  
To set my heart on fire  
In my grey world to colour everything.*

Graham Kendrick<sup>1</sup>

I will leave the reader who is persuaded by the case set out in this book to work out the full application to their own faith, and their own science. It is a valuable exercise to ask this question, whatever one chances to encounters in nature: “What does it mean for my heavenly Father to have pronounced this ‘very good’”? The answer can have some far-reaching implications.

Richard Bauckham, in a book justifying the eyewitness testimony of the Gospels against the Higher Critics<sup>2</sup>, quotes a poignant Holocaust memory from a Jewish woman, named Edith P., in transit from Auschwitz to a labour site. Deliberately consigned to living hell by those committed to burning away God's genetic mistakes (and, of course, to building a Promethean empire that would last a thousand years), she hoisted herself painfully on another prisoner's starving shoulders to see, through a crack in the railway wagon, where their train had stopped. She looked out:

*“And... I... saw... Paradise! The sun was bright and vivid. There was cleanness all over. It was a station somewhere in Germany. There were three or four people there. One woman had a child, nicely dressed up; the child was crying. People were people, not animals. And I thought: ‘Paradise must look like this!’”<sup>3</sup>*

The story, of course, has much to say about human sin and unjust suffering which must challenge any superficiality in our theology. But it also has something to say about nature – that it is all too possible to lose sight of what it really is. In this case, it was privation that first stole away, and then momentarily revealed, the paradisiacal vision of our present creation. But it is also possible for a strong delusion to lead us to believe a lie.<sup>4</sup> Such a delusion seems to have affected the vision of a great part of the Christian world for half a millennium, and maybe it is time to expose its pagan sources.

Much of the impetus for people to do so much hard work on a theodicy of nature comes from the complaint of unbelievers, back to Darwin himself, that a good God could not have made the natural

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<sup>1</sup> Kendrick, Graham, *Sunset* (Footsteps on the Sea, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Adam was judged by God's word – Prometheus, practising Higher Criticism, turns the tables!

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Bauckham, Richard, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2006) p.494.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

world we see. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and our eyes have, perhaps, been dimmed by a debased theology of Creation, so that we see nature with doubting eyes rather than with God's. When we consider how the pessimistic attitudes of paganism were swept away by the persuasive arguments of the early Christians and their joyful assertion that our world is the *good* creation of our heavenly Father, perhaps our best strategy is to seek to recover their vision. "If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light."<sup>5</sup>

I will just add a word of personal testimony. In the time since I began to suspect that what I had always assumed about creation's corruption was mistaken, I've begun to see the world with new eyes. When I look out of my study window, I find I can admire the beauty of what I see without a subconscious "Yes but..." imposing itself on the view. I can love the freedom of a soaring buzzard without thinking, "Yes, but it's spoiled by the evil suffering that sustains it." I can rejoice in a gorgeous metallic red and blue parasitic *Chrysis* wasp on the patio and leave its lifestyle in God's wise hands, rather than accept uncritically Darwin's jaundiced assessment<sup>6</sup>. If I pick up an ammonite from the beach, or read about a newly discovered function for DNA, I find that what I see and experience leads me, in a new way, into expressing worship on the creation's behalf; the role for which I myself was created. The more of nature I appreciate, the more of it I may bring into the sacred space of God's temple of creation. Practically, I will be more its steward and less its exploiter. Finally, I will rejoice as much to see its new, yet familiar, face, come the transformation of the end of the age, as I shall at the sight of my own new face in the mirror.

That, in a very real sense, is to return to Eden, and to extend its borders.

*To think well is to serve God in the interior court: To have a mind composed of Divine Thoughts, and set in frame, to be like Him within. To conceive aright and to enjoy the world, is to conceive the Holy Ghost, and to see His Love: which is the Mind of the Father. And this more pleaseth Him than many Worlds, could we create as fair and great as this. For when we are once acquainted with the world, you will find the goodness and wisdom of God so manifest therein, that it was impossible another, or better should be made. Which being made to be enjoyed, nothing can please or serve Him more, than the Soul that enjoys it. For that Soul doth accomplish the end of His desire in Creating it.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6.22.

<sup>6</sup>"I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidae* with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars." Letter to Asa Gray (22 May 1860).

<sup>7</sup> Traherne, Thomas (1636-1674), *Centuries of Meditations* (New York: Cosimo Classics 2007) 1/10, p.7.

"And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a merry Christmas, and God bless all of you—all of you on the good Earth." December 24<sup>th</sup> 1968

**Frank Borman**