

Doctrine of God Part 21-God the Creator

Whether it is in the beauty, power, or complexity of creation, a taste of God's wonder is engraved on all things as an unmistakable testament of His incomprehensible glory. The glory of God has been disclosed in the whole workmanship of the universe: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1) and "the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). There are two helpful ways to express the presentation of God's glory in creation. First, His glory is like a brilliant light shed abroad—even to the darkest reaches of the earth. This flashing light penetrates all men's minds (Rom. 1:19–20). It radiates richly throughout all the heavens, where the Lord's majesty is shed forth (Ps. 104:2). There is no place where the sparks of His glory cannot be discerned. Second, the glory of God is revealed in creation like an image in a mirror. The glory of the invisible God is reflected visibly by His creation (Heb. 11:3). This allows all to gaze upon the invisible nature of God, as portrayed in His creation.

Whether God's glory appears like a light or like an image in a mirror, truly men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see Him. Though God's whole creation displays His glory, it is man himself, as the pinnacle of creation, who reveals God's glory most explicitly. He is a rare spectacle of God's power, goodness, and wisdom. Infants have tongues so eloquent to preach God's glory that there is no need at all for other orators (cf. Ps. 8:2). The human body—from its mouth and eyes to its very toenails—exhibits exquisite workmanship. Man's soul, in intelligence, imagination, memory, and even in dreaming, speaks of his Creator. The image of God has been so fully stamped upon men that, as all are adorned with an air of His glory, God readily testifies that He is the Father of all (Acts 17:28). God has made man His masterpiece, surpassing all else in creation. Further, as the church is conformed to the express image of the invisible God, Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3), the glory of God becomes more distinct. For the unbeliever, the expression of God in creation cannot be missed, even if the darkness of his mind causes the image to appear clouded. For him, the glory of God displayed in creation is a testimony against unbelief (Rom. 1:19–20). In addition to the inward witness of the heart, God has provided innumerable evidences in the world of His existence and of man's duty to submit to his Creator (cf. Acts 14:16–17). The glory of God is inscribed in creation with bold letters, yet the unbeliever has exchanged the glory of the incorruptible for images of corruptible things (Rom. 1:23). This confusion of the creation with the Creator supplants the true God with a shadow deity, depriving God of His right as Creator and denying creation's proper place as an announcement of the glories of its Maker.

Though God sweetly attracts men with semblances of His glory, man's rashness and superficiality, joined with ignorance and darkness, have led to disdain for creation's testimony and, ultimately, to a rejection of the Creator Himself. For the believer, the beauty of creation speaks of the majestic beauty of his God. With Scripture's revelation and the Spirit's work, the believer is able rightly to understand and appreciate the glory of God displayed in creation. He hears God's awesome voice upon the waters, breaking the cedars, shaking the wilderness, and causing new birth; thus, the believer worships the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Ps. 29). Examining creation brings him to praise and submit to his sovereign Creator—who sustains the mass of heaven and earth by His Word. God's nod alone shakes the heavens with thunderbolts; kindles the air with flashes; disturbs the earth with storms, and then silences them; and compels the sea to hang as though in midair, only to make it calm again. All of this incites reverential awe and adoration in the heart of every believer for the glorious God heralded by creation. Adapted from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.5.1–3, 13–14; 1.6.14

One of the foundational truths of Scripture and the Christian faith is that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is before all things, and all things exist because of Him. He was not caused or made by something or someone greater than Himself; rather, He is the Cause and Maker of all things, and nothing that does exist would exist apart from Him. He alone is Creator; no one shares this title with Him.

Isaiah 40:28...

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the Lord,

And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth

Does not become weary or tired.

His understanding is inscrutable.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary,

And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired,

And vigorous young men stumble badly,

³¹ Yet those who wait for the Lord

Will gain new strength;

They will mount up *with* wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

Some of the most important statements in Scripture with regard to God as Creator are found in the following passages.

Genesis 1:1-2...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

NOTES: In this context, “beginning” refers to the inauguration of the creation of the universe. It comes forth from God and thus presupposes God’s eternity. The word “created” comes from the Hebrew word *bara*, which in the Scriptures is used only with reference to God. Not even the highest order of angels contributed to creation; it is the product of God’s design alone. Thus, all glory belongs to God alone!

Nehemiah 9:6...

⁵ Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah, said, “Arise, bless the Lord your God forever and ever!

O may Your glorious name be blessed
And exalted above all blessing and praise!
⁶ “You alone are the Lord.
You have made the heavens,
The heaven of heavens with all their host,
The earth and all that is on it,
The seas and all that is in them.
You give life to all of them
And the heavenly host bows down before You.

This text is an affirmation of Genesis 1:1-2. Creation is the work of God alone, and to Him alone is worship due. If the heavenly hosts bow down before God because of creative work, how much more should mortal man bow in reverence, worship, and thanksgiving?

Jeremiah 10:12...

¹¹ Thus you shall say to them, “The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”

¹² *It is* He who made the earth by His power,
Who established the world by His wisdom;
And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.
¹³ When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the heavens,
And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain,
And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

NOTES: It is important to note that the creation reveals something not only of the power of God, but also of His wisdom.

The power needed to create and sustain the world is incalculable, but God brings it to pass without the slightest reduction of His power or strength. Similarly, the complexity of the smallest cell baffles the most brilliant of men, but the creation of the entire universe is only a small example of God's wisdom and understanding.

Hebrews 11:3...

³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

NOTES: Theologians often use a Latin phrase to describe God's work of creation: *creatio ex nihilo*—"creation out of nothing". God did not use already existing materials to make the universe; He created it out of nothing, by His own power, and for His own glory.

It is important to understand that the creation of the universe was the work of the Triune God— Father, Son, and Spirit.

Genesis 1:1-2...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

NOTES: The word "Spirit" comes from the Hebrew word *ruach*, which may also be translated, "breath" or "wind." The word "moving" is translated from the Hebrew word *rachaf*, which means, "to hover."...The text clearly refers to the creative work of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

John 1:1-3...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

NOTES: Verse 1 makes it clear that the subject of our text is the Word, the Son of God. John's language could not be more emphatic. All things that exist, without exception, came into being through the creative work of the Son.

Colossians 1:16...

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

NOTES: The three phrases “by Him,” “through Him,” and “for Him” (literally, *eis auton* or “unto Him”) are extremely important. The Son is not only the Agent of creation, but He is also the purpose or goal of creation. Both truths are clear affirmations of the Son’s deity. All things were made by the Son and for His honor and good pleasure.

Creation’s Witness to God

Naturalistic evolution seeks to explain creation apart from the existence of God. Although the theory is the predominant thought of our day, it is contrary to everything that reason and the Scriptures declare about our existence. We should never attempt to create a false truce between evolution and the biblical view of the Creator God. If evolution is true, then the Bible is a lie. If the Bible is true, then evolution is nothing more than man’s pathetic attempt to deny the God who he knows exists..

Psalm 19:1-4...

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
² Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

Romans 1:18-23 is one of the most important texts in all the Scriptures regarding God’s existence, the creation of the universe, and man’s knowledge of God.

Romans 1:19-20...

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

NOTES: The Scriptures do not acknowledge or recognize the existence of atheists. It boldly declares that all men know that there is a God of eternal power who is the only plausible explanation for the universe. This truth is affirmed in Romans 1:21: “For even though they knew God...” Some scholars believe that Paul is describing two sources of the knowledge of God.

First, there is an internal, innate, or inherent knowledge of God in every man —“that which is known about God is evident within them” (v.19). Second, there is a knowledge of God that comes from examining creation (v.20). The latter confirms the former.

They did not honor Him as God. From the Greek word **doxázo**, which literally means, “to glorify” or “to esteem as glorious.” The term may also communicate the idea of extolling, magnifying, or worshiping God. Man’s refusal to acknowledge God makes it impossible for them to glorify or honor Him. Further offense is committed by attributing the wonders of His creation to a mindless process of random chance.

They did not give thanks. In Acts 17, Paul declares to the Athenians, “He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things” (v.25), and “in Him we live and move and exist” (v.28). For this reason, man’s ingratitude to God is an offense of the most grotesque sort.

Romans 1:18...what is the primary reason for man’s rejection of God as Creator of the universe? The problem is essentially moral, not intellectual.

NOTES: The word “ungodliness” comes from the Greek word **asébia**, which denotes a lack of reverence for God. The word “unrighteousness” comes from the Greek word **adikía**, which denotes lack of conformity to the will of God. The word “suppress” comes from the Greek word **katécho**, which means, “to hold fast or hold back; to hinder, restrain, or detain.” Thus, the primary reason for man’s rejection of God is moral. Fallen man is unrighteous and does not desire a righteous God. Therefore, he suppresses the truth he knows about God and strives to convince himself that God does not exist.

God the Sustainer

The Scriptures teach us that God is not only the Creator but also the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. Nothing that exists would exist apart from Him. If He were to turn away from His creation for even a moment, all would perish. We owe our every breath and movement to Him. Every being—from the highest angel to the lowest worm—lives in absolute dependence upon God. Both the man who bows in humble worship and he who clenches his fist in defiance of God have this in common—they live and breathe and move by His gracious, sustaining power. They exist because He made them, and they breathe because He gives them breath. If He turned away from them, they would turn to dust.

Colossians 1:17...

¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

The Scriptures teach us not only that God created the universe, but also that He faithfully sustains it by His power. Without God, the universe would never have been brought into existence; and without His continued care, the universe and every living thing would perish. All things that exist do so in absolute dependence upon Him.

Job 12:10...

the hand of the Lord has done this,
¹⁰ In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind?

Job 34:14-15...

¹⁴ “If He should determine to do so,
If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,
¹⁵ All flesh would perish together,
And man would return to dust.

It is important to understand that not only the creation but also the sustaining of the universe is the work of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit.

Colossians 1:17...

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

NOTES: The phrase “hold together” comes from the single Greek verb *sunístemi*, [*sun* = with, together + *hístemi* = to stand], which can also mean, “to unite, set together, or endure.” The Son of God is not only the Creator of all things but also the Sustainer or Conserver of all that He has created. As the *logos* or Word (John 1:1-5), He is the unifying principle of all that exists. From the greatest galaxies to the tiniest particles, everything is held together in the Son.

Hebrews 1:3...

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

NOTES: The word “upholds” comes from the Greek verb *phéro*, which means, “to bear or carry.” We marvel at the idea of mighty Atlas of Greek mythology groaning under the weight of the world. Yet Christ upholds the entire universe with a mere word—a simple, effortless command.

With a word the universe was created (Genesis 1:3; Hebrews 11:3), and with a word it is sustained. Such is the power of God.

Psalm 104:27-30...

²⁷ They all wait for You
To give them their food in due season.
²⁸ You give to them, they gather *it* up;
You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
²⁹ You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
You take away their spirit, they expire
And return to their dust.
³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
And You renew the face of the ground.

NOTES: In verse 30, creation is seen as an ongoing work of God by the power of His Spirit. Even though the birth of a child is through natural processes, it is not apart from the work of God. In Psalm 139:13, David testified, “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb.” It is through the powerful, energizing, life-giving work of the Spirit that the sustaining work of the Father and Son is accomplished.

In Acts 17:22-31 is recorded the Apostle Paul’s sermon to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill. The passage contains one of the greatest discourses on God as both the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

²² So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. ²³ For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ ²⁹ Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. ³⁰ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Note the declarations that are made about God and about man's absolute dependence upon Him in the following verses...

He is the God who made the world and all things in it (v.24).
He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth (v.24).

As the Creator of all things, God has the sovereign right to rule over all things.

He gives to all people life and breath and all things (v.25).

NOTES: God has a claim upon all things both by right of creation and by right of His benevolent sustaining of all that He has made. Every breath, every beat of every heart, and "every good thing given" are all from God (James 1:17).

In Him we live, move, and exist (v. 28)

NOTES: This quote is likely taken from a poem attributed to Epimenides of Crete (c. 600 B.C.), which relates the hymn of Minos (a figure of Greek mythology) to his father Zeus...Although Paul is using a declaration from the Greek poets, he is not endorsing their polytheistic ideas; he is simply using their own language to point them away from what they worshiped "in ignorance" (v.23) to the true and living God of the Scriptures.

How are we to respond?

The belief that God created all beings in heaven and on earth should radically affect every aspect of our lives. **First**, it should lead to awe and reverence. The knowledge that there is a God so great that He has created innumerable worlds and beings and sustains them effortlessly is beyond comprehension. Such a God is worthy of absolute reverence. If at times we stand in awe of His creation, how much more should we stand in awe of Him? **Second**, it should lead to thanksgiving and worship. If God had not created us, we would not be. To refuse Him thanksgiving and praise is to be guilty of the greatest arrogance and ingratitude. **Third**, it should lead to humility. What is man that God should take thought of him? We exist because He made us, and apart from Him we are nothing. A lack of humility before God is beyond comprehension. **Fourth**, it should give purpose to our existence. We are not the result of random chance or some mindless process of naturalistic evolution. We were made according to God's design and for His purpose and good pleasure.

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