

11. God as Artist (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

Biblical material: Isa. 64:5–8, Ps. 51:10, Heb. 8:1–5, 1 Chron. 23:5, Rom. 11:33–36, Acts 9:1–22; Ps. 27:4.

Quotes

- When I was young, I said to God, “God, tell me the mystery of the universe.” But God answered, “That knowledge is for me alone.” So I said, “God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.” Then God said, “Well, George, that’s more nearly your size.” *George Washington Carver.*
- Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better. *Andre Gide*
- Art is here because God meant it to be here. *Hans Rookmaker*
- God is really only another artist. *Pablo Picasso*
- God and other artists are always a little obscure. *Oscar Wilde*
- Art is Man’s nature. Nature is God’s art. *James Bailey*

Questions

Why is art important? How do we see “God as Artist”? What is our role in this artistry? How do we “behold the beauty of the Lord”? Seeing God as the Potter, what is he still making? How do we understand this continuing creative process? In what way do we express the creativity of the Creator when we create?

Bible summary

Through these various verses we are told something about God’s creativity. Isa. 64:5-8 tells us about God the Potter. In Ps. 51:10 we echo David’s request for God to create a pure heart within us. God is seen as Architect (even Interior Designer!) in Heb. 8:1-5, and the many instructions regarding the Sanctuary in the Old Testament. God spells out the materials to be used, even the color scheme! God as Musician and one who delights in music is suggested in 1 Chron. 23:5 in God’s instructions to the Levites. Through inspiration God is Author, working through writers—like Paul (see Rom. 11:33-36). Symbolically God is Sculptor, in the way that he molds us. The example of Saul being changed to Paul is given (Acts 9:1–22). In all of this we are “to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord” (Ps. 27:4 NIV).

Comment

As a faith community we have not had much appreciation for art. We are practical and pragmatic. Few of our buildings are known for their beautiful architecture. There are hardly any famous Adventist poets and artists. We have not placed much emphasis on art and literature.

Yet as we look around us we see wonderful examples of God’s artistry. Nature truly is God’s art. If we had been in charge of Creation, we would have made a few limited examples of each animal, bird, or tree. But God in his creative splendor goes wild, making amazing colors and forms, stunning us with their beauty. God truly is an artist as we look at the tiniest micro-organism right up to the most massive galaxy. The heavens declare the glory of God, as do the flowers of the field, even though they fade so

quickly. The Master Artist has taken an interest in designing right down to the smallest detail. The fractal patterns in ferns. The absolute symmetry of crystals. The amazing grandeur of mountains. The swirling nebulas and gas clouds in space. God always has his paintbrush to hand!

For what is beauty? The concept is much discussed, but hard to define. Is it true that beauty is only in the eye of the beholder? We shouldn't even look for beauty if we were only the product of evolution in a deterministic Universe. Some say that's exactly what the Universe is. The product of the interplay of physical forces, with no rhyme or reason. A "thing" that just "is," without any reason for right or wrong, for moral or ethical values, for beauty or compassion or love. Just a mechanical whirling random meaningless incomprehensible blob of matter and energy. But for what? It makes no sense...

Myself I prefer to use eyes of understanding, and see the beauty of the Lord as I gaze into the immensity of space and the incredible Art of the Universe, made by an Incredible Mind that also made me!

Like the various virtues and higher principles, we are "programmed" for beauty—for we follow our Creator. The ugliness of sin has marred that beauty, but we still appreciate the Artist...

I am firmly convinced we need to think more about beauty and art. It is not enough to dismiss art as "secular" or "worldly." While many artists are far from God, we should remember that as we create beautiful things, as we play music or write creatively, we are expressing ourselves in ways that are most like the Creator. Despite our fallen nature, despite all the ugliness of sin that has so infected us, we can still think beautiful thoughts, act with true grace, and in all that we do represent the beauty of our loving Lord.

Ellen White Comments

The home of our first parents was to be a pattern for other homes as their children should go forth to occupy the earth. That home, beautified by the hand of God Himself, was not a gorgeous palace. Men, in their pride, delight in magnificent and costly edifices, and glory in the works of their own hands: but God placed Adam in a garden. This was his dwelling. The blue heavens were its dome; the earth, with its delicate flowers and carpet of living green, was its floor; and the leafy branches of the goodly trees were its canopy. Its walls were hung with the most magnificent adornings--the handiwork of the great Master Artist. {AH 132}

As the character of God puts on the aspect of love, benevolence, beauty, and attraction, they [children] are drawn to love Him. You can direct their minds to the lovely birds making the air musical with their happy songs, to the spires of grass and the gloriously tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air. All these proclaim the love and skill of the heavenly Artist and show forth the glory of God. {CG 534-5}

The great Master Artist has taken thought for the lilies, making them so beautiful that they outshine the glory of Solomon. How much more does He care for man, who is the image and glory of God. He longs to see His children reveal a character after His similitude. As the sunbeam imparts to the flowers their varied and delicate tints, so does God impart to the soul the beauty of His own character. {DA 313}