

HEAVENLY FATHER

Mt 6:9; Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:20-24

I. STARRY HEAVENS ABOVE Gn 1:1; Ps 19:1-6

- A. Astronomy: ancient, uniquely human endeavor—naming, finding order (e.g. Big Dipper & North Star)
 - 1. Godly astronomers rejoice to see patterns & Pattern-Masker
 - a. “Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), who discovered the laws of planetary motion, wrote: The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order which has been imposed on it by God and which he revealed to us in the language of mathematics. This was no expression of mere deism since Kepler elsewhere revealed the depth of his Christian convictions: “I believe only and alone in the service of Jesus Christ. In him is all refuge and solace.” (John Lennox, *Can Science Explain Everything?* p. 13).
 - b. “Galileo was actually a firm believer in God and the Bible and remained so all of his life. He once said that ‘the laws of nature are written by the hand of God in the language of mathematics’ and that the ‘human mind is a work of God and one of the most excellent’” (Ibid, p. 14).
 - c. Isaac Newton’s deeply religious inquiries, saw divine handiwork throughout creation—“Whence is it that Nature doth nothing in vain; and whence arises all that order and beauty we see in the world.”
 - d. “Allan Sandage, widely regarded as the father of modern astronomy, who discovered quasars and won the Crafoord Prize, astronomy’s equivalent of the Nobel Prize, is in no doubt about his answer: ‘I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence—why there is something instead of nothing.’ (p. 31).
 - 2. Naturalistic temptation (e.g. Carl Sagan & Stephen Hawking)
- B. Astrology: ancient endeavor to discern heavenly powers impact on earth
 - a. Seeking meaning, providence, power in stars—Chinese fortune cookies
 - b. Wise men go to Bethlehem
 - c. Superstitious/deterministic temptation.
- C. Theology: “The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies show forth His handiwork”
 - 1. C.S. Lewis: “the greatest poem of the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world”
 - 2. Glory (*doxa*) “an especially divine quality, the unspoken manifestation of God
 - 3. Beauty—“behold the beauty of the LORD” (Ps 27:4); as understood by Aquinas:
 - a. Integrity or perfection—finished “Pieta” of Michelangelo; “just right” cosmic proportions
 - b. Harmony—Bach oratorios; pleasing scenario of star-studded sky
 - c. Brightness or clarity—Rembrandt’s skill using light; splendor of light in various modes
- D. Analogical/Allegorical Aspects—cf Charles Spurgeon’s *Treasury of David*
 - 1. Infinite spaces suggest Transcendent Creator—Pascal’s awe at vastness of universe
 - 2. Luminous beauty suggests glory, light-giving Light
 - 3. Sun’s power indicates life-giving energy
 - 4. Informative aspects suggest information-packed universe
 - 5. *Planet Narnia* points to intriguing aspects of C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia*

II. ULTIMATE RESIDENCE OF TRIUNE GOD: FATHER, SON, HOLY SPIRIT

- A. Higher Realm of Reality—suggested throughout Scripture
 - 1. Angelic beings regularly appear
 - 2. Supernatural beings evident to Ghazi (2 Kings:6:17)
 - 3. Appear to Mary & Joseph & shepherds
- B. Jesus “ascended into heaven, seated at right hand of the Father”—where Christ now IS
 - 1. Ascended (Acts 1:9-11)—visible phenomenon
 - 2. Retaining His resurrected Body—forever Incarnate God/man
 - 3. Surrounded by the redeemed—in the “paradise” promised the good thief
 - 4. St Stephan’s vision: “Son of man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55-56)
 - 5. St Paul’s visions: road to Damascus (Acts 9:4), “Third Heave” (2 Cor 12:2-4), and in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11)
 - 6. St James the Just’s final vision in Jerusalem—Josephus’ record
- C. Heavenly details revealed in John’s *Revelation*: Rev 4:1—throne & thrones, rainbows, lightning etc.; Rev 5:1-5—scroll; Rev 6:9—altar; Rev 7:9-17—Lamb & martyrs; Rev 8:6—musical instruments; Rev 14:1-5—Lamb & redeemed; Rev 21:1-22—New Heaven & Earth.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon re Ps 19 in Treasury of David

"The heavens declare the glory of God." The book of nature has three leaves, heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page would be sadly imperfect, and especially the great Natural Bible, since its first pages, the sun, moon, and stars, supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies, and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the book at the right place.

The heavens are plural for their variety, comprising the watery heavens with their clouds of countless forms, the aerial heavens with their calms and tempests, the solar heavens with all the glories of the day, and the starry heavens with all the marvels of the night; what the Heaven of heavens must be hath not entered into the heart of man, but there in chief all things are telling the glory of God. Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore. The heavens declare, or are declaring, for the continuance of their testimony is intended by the participles employed; every moment God's existence, power, wisdom, and goodness, are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which shine upon us from above. He who would guess at divine sublimity should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, and majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of the fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train. It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the "glory of God," for they deliver to us such unanswerable arguments for a conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them. The testimony given by the heavens is no mere hint, but a plain, unmistakable declaration; and it is a declaration of the most constant and abiding kind. Yet for all this, to what avail is the loudest declaration to a deaf man, or the clearest showing to one spiritually blind? God the Holy Ghost must illuminate us, or all the suns in the milky way never will.

"The firmament sheweth his handy-work;" not handy, in the vulgar use of that term, but hand-work. The expanse is full of the works of the Lord's skilful, creating hands; hands being attributed to the great creating Spirit to set forth his care and workmanlike action, and to meet the poor comprehension of mortals. It is humbling to find that even when the most devout and elevated minds are desirous to express their loftiest thoughts of God, they must use words and metaphors drawn from the earth. We are children, and must each confess, "I think as a child, I speak as a child." In the expanse above us God flies, as it were, his starry flag to show that the King is at home, and hangs out his escutcheon that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar. Strange is it that some who love God are yet afraid to study the God-declaring book of nature; the mock-spirituality of some believers, who are too heavenly to consider the heavens, has given colour to the vaunts of infidels that nature contradicts revelation. The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace; only the foolish have any fears lest the honest study of the one should injure our faith in the other. Dr. M'Cosh has well said, "We have often mourned over the attempts made to set the works of God against the Word of God, and thereby excite, propagate, and perpetuate jealousies fitted to separate parties that ought to live in closest union. In particular, we have always regretted that endeavours should have been made to depreciate nature with a view of exalting revelation; it has always appeared to us to be nothing else than the degrading of one part of God's works in the hope thereby of exalting and recommending another. Let not science and religion be reckoned as opposing citadels, frowning defiance upon each other, and their troops brandishing their armour in hostile attitude. They have too many common foes, if they would but think of it, in ignorance and prejudice, in passion and vice, under all their forms, to admit of their lawfully wasting their strength in a useless warfare with each other. Science has a foundation, and so has religion; let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let the one be the outer and the other the inner court. In the one, let all look, and admire and adore; and in the other, let those who have faith kneel, and pray, and praise. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other the holiest of all, separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which, on a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, we pour out the love of a reconciled heart, and hear the oracles of the living God."

An Interview with Dr. Michael G. Strauss

Re the Fine-tuning of the Universe

“Sure,” answered Strauss. “One parameter is the amount of matter in the universe. As the universe expands, all matter is attracted to other matter by gravity. If there were too much matter, the universe would collapse on itself before stars and planets could form. If there were too little matter, stars and planets could never coalesce.” “How finely tuned is the amount of matter?” “It turns out that shortly after the big bang, the amount of matter in the universe was precisely tuned to one part in a trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion,” he replied. “That’s a ten with sixty zeroes after it! In other words, throw in a dime’s worth of extra matter, and the universe wouldn’t exist.”

—Lee Strobel, *The Case for Miracles* (p. 176).

The examples could go on and on; in fact, entire books have been written about them. Here’s another illustration: the ratio of the electromagnetic force to the gravitational force is fine-tuned to one part in ten thousand trillion trillion trillion. Astrophysicist Hugh Ross said to understand that number, imagine covering a billion North American continents with dimes up to the moon—238,000 miles high. Choose one dime at random, paint it red, and put it somewhere in the piles. Blindfold a friend and have him pick out one dime from the billion continents. What are the odds he’d choose the red dime? One in ten thousand trillion trillion trillion. But the most extreme example I’ve seen comes from Oxford mathematical physicist Roger Penrose, who partnered with Stephen Hawking to write *The Nature of Space and Time*. His calculations show that in order to start the universe so it would have the required state of low entropy, the setting would need to be accurate to a precision of one part in ten to the power 10¹²⁵. This mind-blowing number, Penrose said, ‘would be impossible to write out in the usual decimal way, because even if you were able to put a zero on every particle in the universe, there would not even be enough particles to do the job.’”

—Ibid., (p. 178).

Plato's Timaeus

TIMAEUS: All men, Socrates, who have any degree of right feeling, at the beginning of every enterprise, whether small or great, always call upon God. And we, too, who are going to discourse of the nature of the universe, how created or how existing without creation, if we be not altogether out of our wits, must invoke the aid of Gods and Goddesses and pray that our words may be acceptable to them and consistent with themselves.

First then, in my judgment, we must make a distinction and ask, What is that which always is and has no becoming; and what is that which is always becoming and never is? That which is apprehended by intelligence and reason is always in the same state; but that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason, is always in a process of becoming and perishing and never really is. Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created. The work of the creator, whenever he looks to the unchangeable and fashions the form and nature of his work after an unchangeable pattern, must necessarily be made fair and perfect; but when he looks to the created only, and uses a created pattern, it is not fair or perfect. Was the heaven then or the world, whether called by this or by any other more appropriate name—assuming the name, I am asking a question which has to be asked at the beginning of an enquiry about anything—was the world, I say, always in existence and without beginning? or created, and had it a beginning? Created, I reply, being visible and tangible and having a body, and therefore sensible; and all sensible things are apprehended by opinion and sense and are in a process of creation and created. Now that which is created must, as we affirm, of necessity be created by a cause. But the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible.

TIMAEUS: Let me tell you then why the creator made this world of generation. He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men: God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable.