

**Psalm 29***Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

Give to the LORD, ye sons of fame,  
 give to the LORD renown and pow'r;  
 ascribe due honors to His name,  
 and His eternal might adore.

The LORD proclaims His pow'r aloud  
 o'er the vast ocean and the land;  
 His voice divides the wat'ry cloud,  
 and lightnings blaze at His command.

He speaks, and howling tempests rise,  
 and lay the forest bare around:  
 the fiercest beast, with piteous cries,  
 confess the terror of the sound.

His thunders rend the vaulted skies,  
 and palaces and temples shake.  
 The mountains tremble at the noise,  
 the valleys roar, the deserts quake.

The LORD sits sov'reign o'er the flood;  
 the Thund'rer reigns forever King;  
 but makes His temple His abode,  
 where we His awful glories sing.

We see no terrors in His name,  
 but in our God a Father find.  
 The voice that shakes all nature's frame,  
 speaks comfort to the pious mind.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***God, Creation, and Humanity, Part 9: Natural Revelation***Kevin T. Bauder*

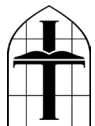
In spite of the fall, humans still have the responsibility to exercise dominion over the earth and to subdue it. Sadly, none of us has ever seen unfallen people exerting dominion over an unfallen world. Nobody knows exactly what that would have looked like. Instead, we find ourselves fighting both the chaotic element that has been introduced into nature and the predatory element that is now part of us.

Yet we have no choice. We have no other world in which to live. We must eat and drink. We require shelter and clothing. We must devise these goods and whatever else we need from the natural materials that are available to us. To survive, we must bend nature to our wills. The only question is how best we can do that.

Answering that question is like assembling a jigsaw puzzle. For an answer to be true and useful, multiple considerations must be reckoned upon. These considerations are like the pieces of the puzzle. They must be fitted together, hopefully without forcing any of the pieces. As they fit together, a picture will begin to emerge.

Several important pieces are already on the table. Let me review a few of them. The world is created, and therefore the Creator and not the world is ultimate. The created order is fundamentally good in the sense of being useful or beneficial. Humans are part of the created order, but unlike the rest of creation, they are made in the Creator's image and given dominion over other things. This dominion includes the responsibility to "subdue" creation: that is, to advance its order and utility. Because humans sinned, an element of disorder and evil was introduced into both creation and human dominion. Consequently, human oversight of creation has been weakened and twisted, but not eliminated.

Each of these pieces is vital to the puzzle. If any is neglected, the picture will be distorted or incomplete. Now, two more pieces of the puzzle need to be placed on the table. The first is that the created order gains its value from more than just its utility to human beings. It is also valuable as a partial but important revelation of God's character.



*In the Nick of Time* is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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The Scriptures teach that “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1). God reveals Himself so clearly in the things He has made that those who reject Him are without excuse (Rom 1:19–20). According to these texts, what God has revealed through nature includes His glory, His eternal power, and His divine nature. Natural revelation is not sufficient to lead someone to salvation, but it presents God so clearly that people who reject Him will rightly be held accountable.

God is a maker, and makers leave the marks of their personhood upon the things they make. Carpenters and plumbers reveal how skillful and careful they are by the work they do. Beethoven’s symphonies have a different character than Tchaikovsky’s. Breughel the Younger paints in a very different mood from Rembrandt, though the two are near in space and time. Makers stamp their character into the things they make. So it is with God and the creation He has made.

King David was able to perceive God’s activity even in the brokenness of the world. In Psalm 29 he traces the path of a devastating thunderstorm as it rolls in off the Mediterranean and assaults the forests and hills. Such storms are part of the disorder that has troubled creation since the fall. Yet David persistently names the thunder as “the voice of Jehovah,” and he sees in this storm the marks of God’s power and majesty. He calls upon his readers to

Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty,  
give unto the LORD glory and strength.  
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;  
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

For the biblical writers, nature was enchanted. It was, in a sense, haunted. Creation is not God, but it displays His handiwork. While sin has brought genuine disorder and calamity into the world, the eternal power and divine nature of God still shine through. Even in its fallen state, creation should move people to shout glory to God.

This is my Father’s world,  
He shines in all that’s fair,  
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,  
He speaks to me everywhere.

When Christians approach the natural order, they should never treat it as God. They should, however, treat it with tender care, because it is a medium through which God has seen fit to make Himself known. They should be reluctant to damage the created world in ways that would permanently reduce its beauty and majesty. In fact, beauty and majesty are among the good things that humans should try to advance as they promote increased order and utility within the world.

Beauty and majesty do not require pristine preservation. Yes, an unplowed prairie is beautiful, but so are green fields of corn and beans alternated with pastures of clover dotted with red cattle. Wildflowers are beautiful, but so are the gardens of Schloss Schönbrunn or Château de Fontainebleau. There ought to be room on the planet for both natural and cultivated beauties. Christians who hold a right view of creation will try to ensure that there is.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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