

## THE MYSTERY OF CREATION AND OUR FUTURE

**Ben Hegarty OP**

"For you love all things that exist,  
and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made  
anything if you had hated it.

How would anything have endured if you had not willed it?  
Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved?  
You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, lover of life." Wis.11:24-26.

### Introduction

Storms, pollution, desertification, rising water levels blight our present and future. For far too long, nature is seen as a commodity to be exploited without wonder or respect.

In the year 2015, Pope Francis launched the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*. Leading experts from all quarters were involved in the composition of the text. Inspired by St. Francis, the world of nature was presented as our common home which is described as our sister and mother.

*Laudato Si'* is of great breadth. It fully acknowledges the achievement and wonder of contemporary science. It also awakens us to the extraordinary magic that pulsates all round us.

Our Bible opens our hearts and minds. It is one book from Genesis to Revelations. It has emerged over a thousand years. This one book, made of many books, opens to us streams of thought, decision and challenge. The multitude that gave birth to the Book, the Bible, reflects many situations, different ways of thinking, times of peace and times of desperate misery. Finally, there is the sequence of documents which introduces the prophetic figure of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is quite evident that the Bible has all the possibilities of a classic. Classics are open-ended with an element of mystery that contain a surplus of meanings. In the words of the British literary critic, Frank Kermode, "The books we call classics possess intrinsic qualities that endure, but possess also an openness to accommodation which keeps them alive under endlessly varying dispositions."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kermode, Frank, *The Classic*, London, Faber and Faber, 1975, p.44.

## The Big Bang and Creation

In the 1920s a young American astronomer, Edwin Hubble, discovered that all the galaxies were moving away from each other. About ten years later, Georges Lemaître, a Belgian priest-mathematician, noted that if the stars were moving from each other, the whole thing must have had a beginning from where it all began. He pursued the issue and worked back to the origins of the expansion. The beginning of the universe was a "primeval atom". In it, all the energy that exists was compacted to an unimaginable intensity. This exploded and became our universe. The late English astrophysicist, Stephen Hawking, commented on the reaction of many. "Many people do not like the idea that time had a beginning, probably because it smacks of divine intervention... There were therefore a number of attempts to avoid the conclusion that there had been a big bang."<sup>2</sup>

Robert Jastrow was an American astronomer and planetary physicist. He was a leading NASA scientist. He wrote, "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."<sup>3</sup>

Built into the intensity of this explosion was an extraordinary precision of forces which balanced expansion and contraction and enabled what was to come. If there were the slightest tiniest difference, even one millionth of one percent in the rate of expansion, there would be no universe, no planet earth, no minds that would see, explore and give thanks for the wonder and gift of our human lives. The primordial particles would have sped, continuing to part from one another and eventually vanish into an infinity of nothingness; or if the force of gravity was a tiny bit stronger, it would drag the particles back to where they came from.

Almost immediately, the first atom, helium, appeared accompanying the multitude of particles.. These clumped into discrete clouds which increased the whisper of their gravity. The clouds clumped into stars. Within the titanic gravity of stars, particles and helium were fused into more complex atoms. In time, one by one, the stars collapsed, exploded, scattered the atoms. These eventually gathered to go through the same system and produced more complex atoms from bigger stars with more intense gravities. The molecule of iron arrived through

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<sup>2</sup> Hawking, Stephen, *A Brief History of Time*, London, Bantam Press, 1988, pp.46-7.

<sup>3</sup> Jastrow, Robert, *God and the Astronomers*, London, Norton, 1978, p.107.

many explosions before it found its place in the Periodic Table - the list of the atoms. The evolutionary process continued when small stars cooled down into planets and eventually into our wonderful and mysterious planet earth and its moon.<sup>4</sup> This remarkable gathering of factors enabled the emergence of life.

Billions of relationships, led to a startling, breath taking development. This too had to be exactly measured. With the coming of human beings relationship became self-aware, free and fulfilling. Gravitation pull becomes the wonder of love. Love is relationship. Love is a decision; love is personal.

### **Archaeology and the Love of God**

From the year 1100 b.c. to 612 b.c. a city called Nineveh, with ups and downs, controlled a vast empire. It is known as the Assyrian Empire. It reached down to the Persian Gulf, up the rivers Tigris and Euphrates; swung across a fertile zone, down to a strip of land bordered by the Mediterranean and the desert on the East and finally reached Egypt. A small part of that strip marked the Holy Land.

For most of his reign, Assyria's king Ashurbanipal was forced to deal with mounting pressure coming from both ends of his empire. Towards the end of his life, he devoted himself to accumulating a great library attached to his palace. He died in 627 b.c. In 612 b.c. the control of that vast area passed into the hands of the city of Babylon. Nineveh turned into a ruin.

What is left of Nineveh is located in Northern Iraq.

In 1847, a young English diplomat, Austen Henry Layard set out to explore the ruins. In the remains of the library he unearthed 22,000 clay tablets and a large number of sculptured slabs.

The books survived because they were written on clay tables which were baked solid by heat of sun or ovens. No-one was able to read the documents. They were written in an unknown script, an unknown language, an unknown vocabulary.

In many other archaeological sites, tens of thousands of tablets have been found, - letters, prayers, dispatches, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> 'The more I examine the universe and details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming.' Dyson, Freeman, *Disturbing the Universe*, New York, Harper and Row, 1979, p.250.

Brilliant minds, relatively quickly, learned how to read these texts and grasp a picture of that world's understanding of reality.

Starting with Ashurbanipal's library, we read that the vision of Middle East peoples was profoundly pessimistic. The material universe is evil of its very nature. Records of that way of thinking can be found in archaeological sites in many parts of the Middle East.

It all began in a battle in the heavens, evil gods and goddesses were slain. Their bodies were thrown out of the heavens and out of this evil refuse, the world and humanity was made. Humanity of its very nature was evil; men and women were seen as the playthings and servants of the gods and goddesses. There was no real freedom; human life and worldly events were determined by the heavenly bodies, sun, moon and stars - astrology therefore was very important.

*Enuma Elish "When above...."* - (the name of the document)

"I will take blood and fashion bone. I will establish a savage; 'man' shall be his name. Truly, savage-man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!"..."They bound him, holding him before Ea. They imposed on him his punishment and severed his blood vessels. Out of his blood they fashioned mankind. He imposed on him the service and let free the gods. After Ea, the wise had created humankind, had imposed upon them the service of the gods."<sup>5</sup>

A German Catholic scholar, N. Lohfink, writes, "Thus the guilt which had come into being in the divine realm is enclosed and eternalized in the mortal existence of man, prey to all kind of evil. At the same time, the gods themselves are freed from it. ... Men serve the gods through the cult. But as a preliminary to this, they already serve the gods through their very existence - since they are basically nothing more than the evil rejected from the divine realm, which thereby becomes pure and holy again. The consequences of this mythological statement for a theology of evil are clear. Evil is involved in the very existence of man. It has come to him from the divine realm itself. The meaning of human existence lies in the inclusion of evil in his life."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pritchard, J.B., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Bible*, (ANET), Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950, p.72.

<sup>6</sup> Lohfink, Norbert, *The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament*, London, Burns and Oates, 1969, p.56.

## God and his Creation.

Genesis 1.1-2.4 The Bible opens with a declaration that divine love permeates all that is.

- This theme in the short span of writing indicates a determined emphasis. "And God saw that it was good". Gen.1:4,10,13,18, 23, 25, 31.
- "God said..." In using that introduction to each of the seven groups of creation, a strong statement is made about God's relationship with what he brings into existence. He speaks it into existence. "God said..." It is interpersonal, **I-thou**. What he is doing is redolent with interest and care. God did not produce a machine that ticks away by itself. **He created what he loved with a loving word.**
- There is an extraordinary and rich understanding of the sacredness of all creation in the Bible - the Old Testament and the New. Creation is sacred in being what it is. Light is light; day is day and night is night, a natural process; water falls from the sky and gathers in seas; the various species of vegetation are what they are; the sun, moon and stars measure the days, months, night and darkness; species of land, sea and sky be as they are.

The second account of creation in Genesis 2.4-25 is of interest. "then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." Gen. 2.7; "Out of the **ground** the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Gen. 2.9 "So out of the **ground** the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner". Gen. 2.19-20. "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Gen. 2.23.

What is wonderful is what is normal; incantations and magic are non starters in the mindset of the Genesis authors.

Adam rejoices in God's gift of a partner. The sense of joy is not confined to humans. A sense of creation's joy before the face of God is found in many texts of the Old Testament. The psalm 148 has it:

"Praise God from the heavens...

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all shining stars, praise him, highest heavens, praise him, waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of God at whose command they were made; he established them for ever and ever by an unchanging decree.

Mountains and every hill, orchards and every cedar, wild animals and all cattle, reptiles and winged birds.

"Let everything that breathes praise God" Ps.150:6.

### **The Mystery of Existence**

In 2015, John Hands published a six hundred and seventy four page book called *Cosmosapiens: Human Evolution from the Origin of the Universe*. He was trained as a scientist and The Times Literary Supplement described the book as "an invaluable encyclopaedic achievement". It took him ten years to write it. His research was enormous. Obviously a brilliant mind; he thinks outside the box; and cuts through the complacent orthodoxies of the scientific community.

His words "Creation from nothing. This is the elephant in the room. It is the biggest question that cosmology's orthodox theory about the origin of matter must answer. Put simply, **where** did every thing come from?"<sup>7</sup>

The issues of existence teases the mind of the greatest thinkers. One of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most important philosophers, if not the greatest, was the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein (1888-1951). In the one book he published during his lifetime, *Tractatus*, he writes, "Not **how** the world is, is the mystical, but **that** it is," 6.44.

What is he saying? We can get a concept of **what** exists. Something has existence but what is existence. Things be but what is **being!** We know its effects: it makes possible the something that we know. We move into complete mystery, to mysticism, when we wonder where existence came from in the first place or what it is. Our minds are designed to understand things that **have** being but not being itself. And the ultimate mystery is the One who does not **have** being but is being.

In the Jewish Christian tradition, there is a non consuming fire burning in all that exists. That fire is the energy of God which burns like fire. it is the omni presence of God who pours reality, an energy, more powerful than a billion atom bombs;

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<sup>7</sup> Hands, John, *Cosmosapiens: Human Evolution from the Origin of the Universe*, London, Duckworth, 2015, p.46.

a presence which drags the tiniest speck of matter into being. So, every leaf, every rain drop whispers the presence of love.

The poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the consideration of EXISTENCE, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself thoughtfully. IT IS! Heedless in that moment, whether it were a man before thee, or a flower, or a grain of sand?"... If thy hast indeed attained to this, thou wilt have felt the presence of a mystery, which must have fixed thy spirit in awe and wonder."<sup>8</sup>

### **All Reality is a Burning Bush**

The implication of this is clear. Moses, one day, was startled by a burning bush. Strangely there was no smoke and the bush remained intact. God called him from the midst of the bush and told Moses that he was standing in holy ground. It is all described in Exodus 3. God is present. God was present in that bush holding it in existence; the flame that Moses saw was an experience of the titanic energies that God pours into every thing that is. This divine presence makes everything sacramental. The universal 'burning bush' finds striking expression in the words of the orthodox theologian, Kallistos Ware, quoted by Elizabeth Theokritoff. "nature is sacred... The entire cosmos is one vast burning bush, permeated by the fire of the divine power and glory."<sup>9</sup>

*The Text:* "Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' ... And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."

Now what is this all about? - this burning bush. There are many ways in which God can communicate and does. There are many examples in which God claims people's attention. A burning bush is pretty strange but it might not be so strange.

The flame that Moses saw was an experience of the titanic energies that God pours into everything that is. This divine presence makes everything sacramental.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Beckett, Lucy, *In the Light of Christ: Writings in the Western Tradition*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, p.369.

<sup>9</sup> Cunningham, Mary B., and Theokritoff, Elizabeth, Ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, Theokritoff, E. "Creator and creation", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.72.

Even the tiniest comet in outer space is holy ground. Moses experienced the presence of God in that burning bush. If we think about it, everything is a burning bush revealing the presence of God.

### **Jesus gets Nature to Speak**

There is little else said about the wonder and delight of creation in the Christian literature of the Bible. Why should it!? The wealth of the wonder of creation is amply treated in the texts they received from Judaism.

In his teaching, Jesus endlessly drew from his environment the message of God. We see this in the multitudes of his stories where he draws attention to nature to illustrate his message.<sup>10</sup> There is a sense of awed appreciation in what he said when he looked across the countryside one day. *"Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or to spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of those."* Mt. 6:28.

When Jesus wanted to pray he went off into the countryside; he surrounded himself with nature. It is astonishing how often this is mentioned in the Gospels. His cathedral was the mountains, the woods and the fields.

*"After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,"* Mt. 14:23

*"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."* Mk. 1:35

*"Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."* Lk. 5:16

*"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."* Lk. 6:12

*"About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray."* Lk. 9:28

When the early Christians gather for their Eucharist, "the breaking of the bread", they used what was ordinary in every kitchen, - ordinary bread, oil and wine.

Jesus spoke less of the coming of the kingdom and more of living the values of the kingdom here and now. He is robust and forthright when he teaches that the

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<sup>10</sup> "This sense of the divineness of the natural order is the major premise of all the parables..." Dodd, C.H., *The Parables of the Kingdom*, London, Nisbet, 1935, p.21.



kingdom of heaven is among us, Lk. 11:20; 17:21. The Father to whom Jesus prayed is intimately involved in the earth. He knows when the sparrow falls, Mt.10:29.

### **The Mystery of Christ and Creation**

As their insight into the reality of Christ grew more profound, the very early Church found texts from the Wisdom literature which teased out further the mystery of Jesus.

*"Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth." Prov. 8.23.*

*"For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. Wis.7.25-26*

Paul makes the identification explicit in so many words when he proclaims 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' I Cor. 1.24

The Fourth Evangelist replaced "Wisdom" with "Word" because of his doctrine of salvation in terms of Word being embedded in us by Spirit. This message becomes very clear in the opening verses of the Gospel.

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with** God, and the Word **was** God. He was in the beginning **with** God. All things **came into being through him**, and without him not one thing came into being... And the Word **became** flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." Jn. 1.1-18.*

There is a continuity between the Son of God who holds all things in existence and the Son of Man "*who emptied himself taking the form of a slave.*" Phil. 2.7. In different ways the divinity reaches into all that is.

### **St. Paul and the Transformation of the Universe**

The key issue for St. Paul was the resurrection of Christ which was the starting point for his reflections on life and creation. It was the incarnate Jesus in his full bodily reality that was transformed by the event. In the mind of Paul this had its implications for every human body and all creation. It is an event in the middle of time and history which anticipates and points to the whole new world which God will inaugurate in one final event. What God did in Christ is his plan for humanity with its history, love and creativity.

Indeed, mysteriously it is his plan for the whole cosmos, the furthest reaches of the universe.

*"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For **the creation waits with eager longing** for*

*the revealing of the children of God; for the **creation** was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that **the creation itself will be set free from its bondage** to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that **the whole creation** has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, **the redemption of our bodies**. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, **we wait for it with patience.**" Romans 8.18-25*

Paul's confident assurance in the lordship of Christ over all creation tells his story. Matter is not alien or irrelevant to the ultimate purpose of men and women. We are irreducibly tied in to a complex web of matter and spirit. As Paul sees it, there can be no creationless redemption and no creation without redemption. In God's plan there is a partnership between humanity, the vast cosmos, the extraordinary, if precarious, varieties of life on this planet and perhaps others. The Resurrection of Christ is a foretaste of a transformed universe. In Christ, humanity and the universe are intimately related. He was there when the cosmos exploded into being. He is the divine breath that holds all things together.

The missionary church is here and now creating beach-heads, in the universe, of God's dawning new creation. For the believers the final outcome is not an escape from materiality. There is no eschatology without all creation being with us in that final divine action when the fullness of him who fills all creation becomes completely and finally manifest.

## **The Joys of the Present and the Wonder of the Future**

### **Does every thing mean nothing really!**

It is strange, but one book of the Bible, seems to be a text of unremitting meaninglessness, the Book of Ecclesiastes. "*Sheer futility*", Qoheleth says, "*Sheer futility: everything is futile! What prophet can we show for all our toil, toiling under the sun*". Eccles. 1.2-3. Over two thousand years later, another member of the Jewish race came to the same way of thinking. His name was Stephen Weinberg who was born in 1933. He is an American theoretical physicist and won the Nobel Prize in Physics. There is a searing darkness in the concluding paragraph of a book he wrote entitled *The First Three Minutes*. It is a study of the very beginning of the universe some 15 billion years ago. He writes, "*The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless. ... But if there is no solace in the fruits of our research, there is at least some consolation in the research itself. Men and women are not content to comfort themselves with tales of gods and giants, or to confine their thoughts to*

*the daily affairs of life; they also build telescopes and satellites and accelerators, and sit at their desks for endless hours working out the meaning of the data they gather. The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human life a little above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy.*"<sup>11</sup>

### **But "For you love everything that exists" Wis. 11.24**

In the Jewish/Christian tradition, the sabbath was designed for quiet awareness, happiness and thanksgiving. The opening chapter of the Bible tells it all. It describes a six day program of creation. With metronomic regularity, each day was climaxed with the words *"God saw it was good"*. When God rested on the Seventh Day, it was to look at, enjoy and love what he created. God is addressed in the Book of Wisdom *"For you love everything that exists," Wis.11.24*. Sabbath is a quality of heart and mind which enables us to pause, look and wonder; then we encounter beauty, remarkable engineering, complexity beyond imagination. The sabbath happens when with God we enjoy what He has created.

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-72) was a deeply spiritual scholar in the Jewish tradition. Much of his thought and spirituality is found in his well known book on the Sabbath. He had a deep commitment to the rituals and traditions of the Jewish Sabbath. He seems to be equally clear that the Sabbath is more than a ritual **day** for those of the Jewish faith. The reality of the sabbath is a necessary dimension of human life, of every day. Hence its inclusion in Genesis 1-11. The Sabbath *"It is not an interlude but the climax of living..." "It is not a date but an atmosphere."*<sup>12</sup>

Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971), a Lutheran theologian, commented on Genesis 2.2. *"It would be sheer folly to regard this resting of God's which concluded the Creation as something like a turning away from the world by God: it is in fact a particularly mysterious gracious turning towards his Creation."*<sup>13</sup>

All living creatures pursue what is necessary - food, continuity and sleep. The emergence of human subjectivity marked something very different from any

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<sup>11</sup> Weinberg, Steven, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe*, London, Fontana, 1978, p.148.

<sup>12</sup> Heschel, Abraham Joshua, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951, pp.14 and 21.

<sup>13</sup> von Rad, Gerhard, *Old Testament Theology 1*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1962, p.148.

possible parallels. This new feature emerging in the universe has "a *surplus intellectual capacity*,"<sup>14</sup> which far exceeded what was necessary for survival.

The human mind pursues its curiosity with extraordinary effect - discovery, analysis, experiment, measurement, contact, equations. However, that is not enough. There is the pursuit of ultimate meaning. That happens when we close the books, turn off the computer, relax and just wonder at what we see. There can be a softening of the equations when we just *be* with the mystery, the mystic reality of this moment of accompaniment. When we pause before a painting, wait and just look, something happens; getting lost within a piece of music and enveloped by hugely evocative sound, something happens; gazing deep into a lonely flower on a mountain top touches something in us. The impressionist painters specialised in capturing the wonder of an ordinary moment; they managed to still a moment in time. Three girls looking out a window; a ballet dancer adjusting the shoulder strap of her dress prior to appearing on the stage; the excitement and chatter of a group of people together; light falling on a haystack. Moments captured that are full of mystery - timelessness. "*Spots in time*", Wordsworth; "*Points of interception of the timeless moment*", T.S. Eliot. It might happen once in a lifetime but never forgotten. It can take many shapes. It was short. It is total gift in its coming and going. It might be a remarkable sense of communion with the world around one. It might be quiet surrender to Infinite Love.

Andrew Briggs is professor of Nanomaterials at the University of Oxford; Hans Halvorson is Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University and has written extensively on the foundations of quantum physics; Andrew Steane is a Physics Professor at the University of Oxford. They struggle to understand the natural world in its own terms. They endeavour to work out scientific explanations for what they discover and see. It leads them on a wild pilgrimage as they discover the incredible levels of interplay and choreographed chaos which is the structure of deepest reality. They are profoundly believing Christians and they write:

*"In discovering this regularity and setting it forth, one is not insulting God by failing to mention Him at some point within the system of forces. Rather, to be faithful to God is to see and describe the system of forces and motions in their own terms, because that is the very system that God has furnished and guaranteed. The gratitude comes at the end, when we sit back and contemplate this great system, and experience the sense of marvel and not a little awe."*<sup>15</sup>

Francis Collins (born April 14,1950) is an American physician-geneticist. When Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, he headed a

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<sup>14</sup> Polkinghorne, John, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Briggs, A., Halvorson, H, Steane, A., *It Keeps Me Seeking: The Invitation from Science, Philosophy and Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp.40-1.

multinational 2,400 scientist team that co-mapped the 3 billion biochemical letters of our genetic blueprint. He accepts evolutionary explanations for what is. How at a deeper level he senses something more profound. *"For me, there is not a shred of disappointment or disillusionment in these discoveries about the nature of life- quite the contrary! How marvellous and intricate, life turns out to be! How deeply satisfying is the digital elegance of DNA! How aesthetically appealing and artistically sublime are the components of living things, from the ribosome that translates RNA into protein, to the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly, to the fabulous plumage of the peacock attracting his mate! Evolution, as a mechanism, can be, and must be true. But that says nothing about the nature of its author. For those who believe in God, there are reasons now to be more in awe, not less."*<sup>16</sup>

Jurgen Moltmann (born 1926), a German Reformed theologian, wrote, *"We know to the extent that which we love,' said Augustine. Through this form of astonished, wondering and loving knowledge, we do not appropriate things, we recognize their independence and participate in their life. We do not wish to know so that we can dominate. We desire to know in order to participate. This kind of knowledge confers community and can be termed communicative knowledge as compared with dominating knowledge. It lets life be and 'cherishes its livingness'. Christian theology must remember this, its own wisdom, if it wants to make its contribution to the conquest of the ecological crisis of scientific and technological civilization."*<sup>17</sup>

Etty Hillesum died in Auschwitz on 30 November 1943. She was transported there from Westerbork transport camp in Amsterdam. Even the barren landscape of the camp could shed moments of wonder. *"At night the barracks sometimes lay in the moonlight, made out of silver and eternity, like a plaything that had slipped from God's preoccupied hand."*<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

We can be swamped by projects, this to be done or that. Then we might stop and there is a blessed moment of awe and wonder, a silent moment. Such is a Sabbath moment which we *never* forget and all creation can reveal its sacramentality.

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<sup>16</sup> Collins, Francis, *The Language of God*, London, Pocket Books, 2007, pp.106-7.

<sup>17</sup> Moltmann, Jurgen, *God in Creation*, London, SCM, 1985, p.32.

<sup>18</sup> She wrote these words in her journal, 23 September, 1942.

*'Days pass, and the years vanish, and we walk  
Sightless among miracles.  
Fill our eyes with Seeing and our minds with knowing.  
Let there  
Be moments when your Presence, like lightning, illumines the darkness in which we  
walk.  
Help us to see, wherever we gaze, that the bush burns,  
Unconsumed.  
And we, clay touched by God, will  
Reach out for holiness and exclaim in wonder, "How filled with awe is this place."<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>19</sup> Jewish Sabbath Prayer Book.