

# Creationist 2.0

## *Creating Gives Perspective*

22 October 2023

### Call to Worship – Psalm 99

The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble!

**He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!**

The LORD is great in Zion;

**He is exalted over all the peoples.**

Let them praise your great and awesome name.

**Holy is he!**

Extol the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain;

**For the LORD our God is holy.**

### Crown him with many crowns

*Matthew Bridges and Godfrey Thring*

Crown Him with many crowns,

The Lamb upon His throne;

Hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns

All music but its own!

Awake, my soul, and sing

Of Him who died for thee,

And hail Him as thy matchless King

Through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life,  
who triumphed o'er the grave,  
and rose victorious in the strife  
for those he came to save;  
his glories now we sing  
who died and rose on high,  
who died eternal life to bring,  
and lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of Love:  
Behold His hands and side;  
Rich wounds yet visible above  
In beauty glorified:  
No angel in the sky

Can fully bear that sight,  
But downward bends his burning eye  
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of years,  
The Potentate of time.  
Creator of the rolling spheres,  
Ineffably sublime.

All hail, Redeemer, hail!  
For Thou hast died for me;  
Thy praise shall never, never fail  
Throughout eternity.

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

*<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/55SUN26.htm>*

#### Wonderful God

The beauty we see in Jesus  
Is your beauty veiled in human flesh  
The love we witness from Bethlehem to Golgotha  
Your love contracted to a span.  
Christ's life fills us with wonder  
How much more your unveiled beauty  
Would leave us overwhelmed  
Trembling  
You are more than eye can bear  
Than mind can ever fathom.

Yet

You have carefully made us  
We cannot fathom you

Yet

We can yet love you

Gratefully we bring our small lives to you, asking that our worship may arise  
from love and be shaped by love. Directed towards the larger loving which is  
our soul's desire.

Most merciful God, we are not completely useless sinners, devoid of all light  
and love. To loathe ourselves would be to blaspheme your name as our Loving  
Creator.

Nor are we hopelessly locked within our flawed genes and the vicious circles of world evil. To cynically settle for repeating old mistakes without hope of change, would be to blaspheme your name as our Loving Saviour.

We know we have been seduced by the evil of the world, and to some degree we have added to the frustration and pain of life.

But you have never ceased to love us,  
never forgotten our names,  
never ceased to recognise the potential for greatness  
that lies within each of us,  
never stopped working for our rescue  
and for our healing and fulfilment.

Please continue your work of redemption. Forgive our sins, cleanse us from the taint of evil, and deliver us from our individual weaknesses. In the hour of temptation help us to be aware of what is happening and to name evil for what it is. Through Christ we pray. Amen

## The Peace

## Notices

### Reading Exodus 33:14-23

<sup>14</sup> He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." <sup>15</sup> And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. <sup>16</sup> For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

<sup>17</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name." <sup>18</sup> Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." <sup>19</sup> And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

<sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; <sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; <sup>23</sup> then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

## Reflection

It's all about perspective. When you see something, you form ideas based not only on what you see, but on your past experiences. Take this picture for example. We all know that these are not small people on the hand of a giant. It is a picture that has been taken by having one person up close and the others much further away. Here's some other pictures. See if you can work out what they are before I show you the complete article.

Knife

Hammer

Chisel

Scissors

Spanner

Zipper

Or how about this song...

The chances are several of those were quite hard to get. The reason for that was the image didn't give you enough information. You are trying to interpret a 2-dimensional image and figure out what the 3-dimensional object might be. The ancient idea of making silhouettes with a backlight uses this idea to create ideas in our minds that would be difficult to make otherwise. Here's a short clip of silhouettes in action.

All this is to say that our senses are easily tricked into telling us things that are not actually real. (Although who is to say what is real?)

I think this is part of the reason that those of us who have grown up in western culture struggle so much with the idea of what the spiritual world is all about. I know plenty of Christians who have no idea how to articulate their concept of the spiritual. And plenty more who will articulate to the end of time and make little sense with any of it. None of them are being deliberately difficult. None of them are trying to mess things up. The problem is that we simply don't have sufficient perspective to be able to make sense of much of what we see and hear. We are so deeply entangled with our cultural understanding of the world that it is incredibly difficult to find a way through it all.

I wonder if that is why Moses said to God, 'Show me your glory, I pray.' He had become aware that he was attempting to speak with and work with this, 'Lord', who existed completely beyond anything Moses could understand. He realised that if he was to be able to do what God required of him, he needed a better perspective, a better view of God. He needed to see the whole hammer, not just the head. He needed to know the whole tune, not just the first note.

I also wonder if God had been waiting for Moses to ask this very question. God understood that if Moses was to lead the people of Israel, this fractious, contentious group of people prone to going their own way at the drop of a hat, then Moses needed to know God. Knowing about God, knowing that God occasionally said stuff was never going to be enough. So, God gave Moses a taste of who he was. Only a taste because that was all he could cope with. A little like a pinch of chilli vs the whole box.

I have this suspicion that if we asked God for something similar, we would receive it. I also suspect that for the most part we don't ask because we have already decided that the head of the hammer is perfectly sufficient for our understanding of what a hammer is and how it functions. It is so much easier to leave the 'reality' of God out of our conversations because it just doesn't fit with our fixed view of how the world works. The problem with that is we then miss out on understanding God's favour. On understanding that we are distinct from every people on the face of the earth. What a tremendous loss! All because we are happy with our 2-dimensional perspective of God. More in a moment.

## God of Wonders

*Chris Tomlin*

Lord of all creation  
Of water, earth, and sky  
The heavens are Your tabernacle  
Glory to the Lord on High

God of wonders beyond our galaxy  
You are holy, holy  
The universe declares Your majesty  
You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth  
Lord of heaven and earth

Early in the morning  
I will celebrate the light  
And as I stumble through the darkness  
I will call Your name by night

Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth

## Reading

## Matthew 22:15-22

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. <sup>16</sup> So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. <sup>17</sup> Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" <sup>18</sup> But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup> Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup> Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" <sup>21</sup> They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>22</sup> When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

## Reflection

The Pharisees had a particular perspective on God and how God interacted with them and with the world around them. The way they understood things, God was in charge and God had put them in charge, like managers. It was their job to do things right and make sure everyone else did things right. By everyone else they were thinking exclusively of the Jews. And if really pressed they were thinking particularly of their particular class of Jews. They would keep an eye on the unwashed crowd and ensure the rules were followed, but their real concern was to make sure that they and theirs would be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. At the end of the day, it was religious racism with a healthy dose of nationalism mixed in. In many ways, not all that dissimilar to Act or Te Pati Maori although those would likely vigorously disavow the religious aspect. To be fair this is the way of people. Everyone has their particular way of looking at the world and thinking about solutions. Take me for example. I think that politicians lie for a living. I doubt that many of them do it deliberately, but it is in the nature of the job to twist the truth to the point that any reasonable person would be unable to recognise it for what it is. Sometimes I wonder if that is what my job amounts to. Whether I am attempting to twist the truth just enough that we can gain some comfort from our circumstances. I don't mean that in a disparaging way. I think that as human beings looking at a world we struggle to understand in any meaningful way, twisting what we understand to make it fit is the best we can do. So I look at my experiences and what I know of your experiences and I begin twisting.

Hoping to massage life and scripture and tradition into something we can walk kind of straight with.

Should you think it seems a rather glum way of looking at the world I would suggest it is a little more realistic than we often own. There is a very human temptation to pretend that we know what we are doing and expect everyone else to fit in with whatever it is we are doing. The Catholics did it with the inquisition. The Protestants did it in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. The Catholics did it to the Protestants. The Protestants did it to the Catholics. Always a case of, "You do things as I like, or I will beat you with a large stick." And now we have done it so long and so hard that when it comes to sticking our heads up above the parapet and suggesting that perhaps things could be a little different, we just don't. At best we moan about the state of affairs among friends and look askance at those pesky protestors and young people with placards who really need to find a job.

Then, along comes Jesus. Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's. Quick quiz. What belongs to the emperor that is not God's to begin with?

I have a confession to make. I am ashamed at my response to this year's election campaign. I watched six main parties and various small groups campaigning on everything from lower taxes to less carbon dioxide to no masks (who uses them anymore anyway?) I saw a campaign that largely focussed on the wealthy, with an underlying expectation that in the end the poor would pay. I saw a campaign that completely ignored the fact that high interest rates and increased unemployment disproportionately affects the poor. I saw a campaign that has resulted in a likely coalition that will do its utter best to take advantage of the poor to the benefit of the wealthy.

Think of it this way. A person on a low paying job is put out of work because interest rates are so high their employer can no longer keep them on. Now, they are a dole bludger. Meanwhile, the rules and regulations that demand their accommodation be kept up to a reasonable standard are watered down and they find themselves living in a cold, damp home while the landlord runs laughing to the bank. Because they don't have a job, they get no tax break. And now their benefit is deliberately set so it won't keep up with inflation. Let me be clear here. I am not being anti-Act or anti-National, I am being anti-lack of care for the poor and the downtrodden. And if the cap fits then wear it.

And I said nothing. I did nothing. I was a silent Christian who went along with this travesty of injustice. As Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing

necessary for evil to triumph in the world is that good men do nothing.” I hesitate to call myself good because I did nothing. I am ashamed of myself. And I have to ask myself, ‘Why?’ Why did I remain silent?

I think that very much like the Pharisees I have a particular perspective on God and how God interacts with me and the world around me. I think too, that it is time for me to ask God to give me a taste of God’s glory. My perspective has become mired in a view of the world that somehow leaves God out of the mix. I need a pinch of chilli to awaken me to the possibilities of a God who will be gracious to whom he is gracious and shows mercy to whom he shows mercy. I need a pinch of chilli to strengthen my spine and bring a dose of God reality into my conversation and action. I long to see the whole hammer and learn how to wield it with skill and strength. I long to stand up to the Pharisees of my world, in the church and beyond it, and say, “Give to God what is God’s, because in the end all of it belongs to God.” It’s a very tall ask, but I ask it anyway, “Will you ask God to show you his glory?” Perhaps together we can stand up to a world that has lost sight of the glory of God.

### We Pray

How often, God are we the ones dancing around the golden calf rather than being covered by your hand in the cleft of a rock? We prefer our comfort to your glory. It is so much easier that way. It is so much less costly that way. We don’t have to examine our motives and wonder what is yours and what belongs to the emperor. Give us a taste of your chilli, I pray. Even those of us who don’t like chilli. Show us your glory, even covered by your hand

### Blessed be your name

*Matt Redman*

Blessed Be Your Name in the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow blessed be Your name  
Blessed Be Your name when I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness blessed be Your name  
  
Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord Still I will say  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name



Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's 'all as it should be' blessed be Your name  
Blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering  
Though there's pain in the offering blessed be Your name

You give and take away  
You give and take away  
My heart will choose to say  
Lord, blessed be Your name

## Offering

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning>

Holy God, source of every good gift: the gifts and offerings we bring to you are simply a token of our desire to walk more closely beside you. We give, knowing that “rendering unto you what is yours” would mean leaving everything at your altar – all we have and all we are. We are not there yet, but with your help, we are on the road to getting there. Bless what we give; may it speak words of compassion, mercy, and love as it empowers your mission and ministry. We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus, whose light we seek to follow. Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves

For the unwilling participants in wars around the world. Men, women and children caught between implacably opposed foes whose goal is destruction of an enemy they have no desire to understand.

For the unwilling participants in economic conflict around the world. Men, women and children who suffer the effects of grasping greed and unthinking machines.

For the leaders presiding over this world, some with vision for a better future for all, others with a vision of enriching themselves. Charge them with seeing the poor, the powerless, the downtrodden and seeking the best for them.

For the sick, those with cancers, with untreatable diseases, with mental health issues, with unbearable anxiety

For ourselves, caught between what is easy and what might change a life or lives. Caught between a taste of glory and the desire for a quiet life.

All these things we pray through Christ who gave us this prayer...

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven holy be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

## Immortal, Invisible

*Walter Chalmers Smith*

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,

Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;

Thy justice like mountains high soaring above

Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, the great and the small;

Through all life Thou livest, the True Life of all;

We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,

And wither and perish, but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory; pure Father of light;

Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;

All praise we would render: O help us to see

'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

## Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the Love of God,

and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.

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