

A Message Which Cannot Be Silenced

by Rev. Tom Aicken

What does it mean, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament (the immeasurable expanse of heaven) shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1)? It means that the natural world reveals, not only the existence of a supernatural Being, but something of His designing skills and creative powers as well. It is rather like the paintings of an exceptional artist. We may not know everything about this creative genius, but his paintings tell us, not only that he is real, but something, too, of his talents and interests.

What the natural world reveals, therefore, is that atheism is utterly irrational and contrary to everything that may be known. It is rather like someone insisting that the earth is flat, that he will not believe otherwise unless it can be proved to him on his own terms, that is, with arguments he can understand and is willing to accept. Such a person regards himself as the judge of what is true, in other words, and that he is not going to allow any evidence to stand in the way of his own firmly fixed conclusions unless he himself should determine that it is worth his looking further into them.

There are many people, of course, including a number of scientists, who embrace such an inflexible stance. This does not come from the study of observational science, as they may claim, but from the twisted instincts and sinful preferences of their own fallen nature. The Bible describes this as suppressing the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). As a matter of fact, observational science overwhelmingly substantiates what God has revealed of Himself to be true, a revelation so loud and constant that even people living on the remotest islands of the sea cannot realistically and in good conscience dismiss it (See Ps. 19:2-4).

Paul picks up on this in the New Testament where he writes, “since the creation of the world His (God’s) invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead (His divine nature, or deity), so that they (unbelievers) are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). This is a message which cannot be silenced, you see. Paul explains how this suppression of truth regarding things that may be known has led to atheism, agnosticism, and even in many cases to idolatry. “Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (vv. 22 & 23).

Christians often find it very difficult to explain the existence, nature and character of God to unbelievers. We too frequently think, "How can they possibly know, and how can I explain it so that they will know?" Yet it is these very unbelievers who need to be challenged with regard to their own misplaced assumptions. How, for instance, can the atheist deny the obvious, or the agnostic simply ignore it? Does he not know that there is nothing in the natural world which can create and sustain itself? And how can the idol-worshipper insist with any degree of logic that images made of stone by human hands are the means of giving life and health and prosperity to those who bow down to them?

It is perfectly true that we cannot prove the existence of God, although, as we have seen, the whole created order constantly shouts it aloud. Nevertheless, it should be those who, in whatever way, question His existence that ought to be confronted and asked to give evidence for their faulty belief systems. Why should we be on the defensive? Let them be on the defensive. And when at last they run out of words, when they can no longer persuade even themselves of their carelessly twisted arguments, perhaps they will be more open to hearing things they had never considered before.

The natural world, as I say, reveals that atheism is irrational, that it is contrary even to common sense and reason. What the natural world does not reveal, however, is how we may **know** this God who has brought us and all things into being. It tells us many things **about** Him, yes, but not the answer to that most important question, how we may actually know and be personally acquainted with this God of whom, through whom and to whom are all things. For that, dear reader, we need to hear from God Himself. And praise be to God, He has spoken. We turn again, then, back to the Bible, to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the inspired and inerrant Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16 & 17)).

What God, the mighty Maker of heaven and earth, has told us in Holy Scripture is that He has sent into the world His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to do two things that we could not do for ourselves: (1) He came as the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) to accomplish successfully what the first Adam failed to achieve, namely, a perfect righteousness (though He was tempted in all points even as we are, yet He was without sin, Heb. 4:15); and (2) having fulfilled this unblemished righteousness, He then laid down His own life to pay the penalty for the sins of His

people so that they, through faith in Him, might have life (God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, 2 Cor. 5:21). This Jesus of Nazareth, fully God and fully man, is the only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Moreover, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God the Father through Him (Heb. 7:25), and He has promised to do so (John 6:37-40). If you are an unbeliever, then, I plead with you and with unbelievers everywhere, to repent of your sins (Prov. 28:13), call upon the Lord while yet He is near (Is. 55:6 & 7), commit all that you are and have to Him. He will abundantly pardon, and, as He has promised, having come to Him, you will by no means be cast out.

I want to draw out of all this as well some important and very practical points of application for Christians, and, if you are such a believer, I pray that these points may be helpful and encouraging to you:

1. If you are someone who knows and loves the Lord, this did not start with you but with God Himself (1 John 4:19). Be thankful therefore for His demonstrating His amazing love toward you in that while you were yet a sinner Christ died for you (Rom. 5:8). Be thankful, too, that He called you through the preaching of the gospel, drew you to Christ by means of it, and made you willing and eager to flee unto Him for refuge (Ps. 110:3). And express your gratitude, believer, not only in words, but in action and faithful service to the Lord (Eph. 2:10).
2. The fact that God has dealt with us as He has, believer, is a very humbling thing, so let us keep this constantly in mind and walk humbly before Him (Phil. 2:5-8). Are we not the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15)? Has God not chosen the foolish of this world, the weak and despised, so that we might not glory in ourselves but in Christ who has become everything to us, all that we need and more than we can imagine (1 Cor. 1:26-31)? Then put away all vanity and pride. Uglier stains on the people of God can hardly be imagined. Let us do justly instead, love mercy and walk humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8).
3. We are called, believer, to be witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ – not orators, nor debaters, but witnesses – witnesses who testify of what great things Christ has done for us and has had compassion on us (Mark 5:19). We can waste too much time and effort trying to devise clever answers to difficult questions, or to find quick insights into mysteries we do not fully understand. What is far more

profitable is to focus on Christ Himself, on what He has done and on what we, as His people, have been given in Him. Quite frankly, this is what every unbeliever needs most to hear, and from whom will he hear it if not from us?

4. As the witnesses of Christ, we are also to be ready always to give answer whenever we are asked about the hope that we have within us (1 Pet. 3:15). We are not just to look back, in other words, or even merely consider what we have now and how we got it; we are to keep looking ahead as well and to encourage others to embrace this same hope which can be found only in Christ. We are to do this with meekness out of respect for the one whom we are addressing, and we are to do it reverently, too, in order to honour the One whom we are called to serve. And, oh, what a hope we have, believer, having been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3)!

5. We are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, but we are also commanded, remember, to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:30 & 31). This means that we are to be there for one another, and especially that we be prepared to put ourselves out for those who are in need, whether other members of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10) or even our enemies (Luke 6:27-31). People often forget what we tell them, but rarely do those who are in need forget what is done for them, and this is such an important part of our witness to them of the things of Christ.

6. These things may appear to us an overwhelming, discouraging (and perhaps even impossible) responsibility, and particularly so if we see ourselves having to forge ahead with little or no help from others. Oh, but we are not alone, believer. The prophet Elijah had to learn this lesson when there were yet 7,000 others who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19: 14-18). The servant of the prophet Elisha had to learn it as well (2 Kings 6: 16 & 17). If we are doing what is right and pleasing to the Lord, we need to remember that the needed resources are with us, and that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). We have special revelation, that sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (Eph. 5:17), and we have general revelation shouting aloud that message which cannot be silenced. Even if men choose not to listen, the heavens still declare the glory of God and His handiwork, and they do so while the whole creation groans and eagerly awaits the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8: 18 – 22).

