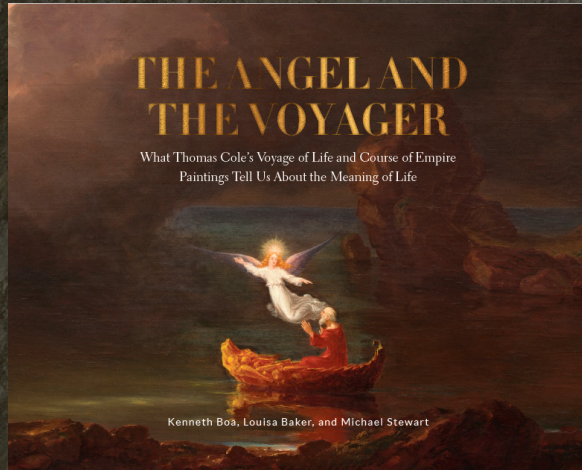


JULY DEAL

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The Angel and the Voyager

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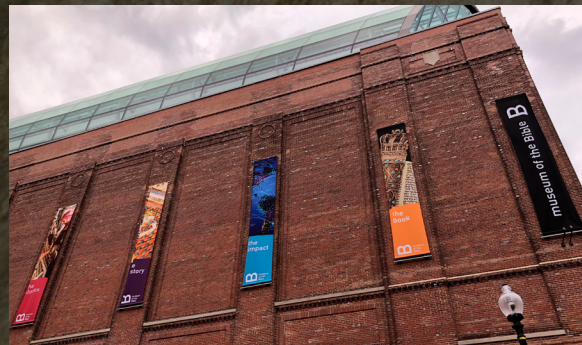
This spiritually rich art book provides a study that ties together Thomas Cole's two masterful series—ultimately prompting readers to consider the dilemma of mortality and the meaning of life.



SERIES I: Beauty in the Sciences

July 13, 2024 | Museum of the Bible, Washington D.C.

Feat. Dr. Ken Boa, Xandra Grieme, Dr. Melissa Cain Travis, Dr. Guillermo Gonzolez, Dr. Jonathan Witt and Dr. Jay Richards



In this inaugural event in the series, Dr. Boa and guests will discuss the natural beauty that surrounds us in the world, integrating scientific insight with spiritual wisdom. Through this approach, they aim to bridge the gap between science and faith, inviting observers to consider the intricacies and majesty of the universe as a testament to divine design. This exploration is not only about the physical but also includes reflections on the philosophical and spiritual implications of our understanding of the universe's structure as a source of awe and wonder.

GOD'S PROMISES

PASSING THE TEST

The story is told of a man, a father with two young sons, who decided to make a career change. When he was in his mid-thirties, he decided to become an attorney. Keeping his regular job, he began attending law school at night. Upon graduation, he took his state's bar exam, which he failed. Undaunted, he took it again . . . and again . . . and again.

Meanwhile, his sons grew up, graduated from college and law school and started their own law practice. The father went to work for the sons as a legal assistant, still unable to practice law himself. Finally, in his sixties, after taking the bar exam fifty-one times, he passed—and set out to accomplish his original goals as a duly licensed attorney.

How many people would have persevered in this situation? Some might have retaken the bar exam three times, or even ten times, before throwing in the towel. But how many people would have kept trying, refusing to allow trials to keep them from achieving their goal?

Joshua 14:6–13 describes another man who refused to give up. Caleb had waited so long and trusted the Lord so faithfully for his promised inheritance. Now he was on the brink of possessing the land, and he was itching for a fight—even at eighty-five years of age! Caleb knew the value of faithfulness, persistence, and trusting in God's strength rather than his own. His faith was as mature and as tough as his attitude—and his body!

Because he had persevered, how much more meaningful would the

attorney's counsel be to a client who felt like giving up? How much more inspirational were Caleb's words to his clan? How much more mature as a Christian will one be when perseverance has finished its work, and faith has been proved genuine? (James 1:2–4).

If you are in the midst of a trial right now and are tempted to give up, remember that, if you persevere, trials will make you more mature. And the more you mature, the more you become “complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:4).

God's Promise:

If you persevere in the tests God gives, you will grow in maturity.

REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart

TRANSFORMING PRAYERS GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE

Lord, when I read the epistles of the New Testament, I am struck by proportion of the content of these letters that dealt with serious problems in the early church. The errors of legalism, early Gnosticism, immorality, and divisiveness were rampant, and each of these posed a serious threat to the purity and propagation of the gospel. And the social, cultural, and moral conditions in the Roman Empire also opposed the spread of Christianity. Your church was challenged by internal and external turmoil, and from a human perspective, should never have survived. And yet it has, and Your gospel has now spread to every nation on earth. And I know that in spite of the internal and external challenges Your people face today, the gates of Hades will not overpower Your church. I thank You for your sovereign grace in the past, present, and future.

Reflections Ministries

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Encountering Beauty in the Sciences

By: Ken Boa and Cameron McAllister

Science as an Invitation to Worship

In some ways, the microscope and the telescope have played an indispensable role in shaping the scientific reductionism of our age. By magnifying what had previously seemed impossibly remote, these two devices greatly exaggerated our sense of mastery over the universe we inhabit. Certainly, this line of thought tends to bring into sharp focus a major source of distrust toward the hard sciences on the part of many believers—namely, the notion that they have displaced religion and made God an “unnecessary hypothesis.” From Bertrand Russell and Carl Sagan to Stephen Hawking and Neil Tyson Degraasi, plenty of celebrated public intellectuals have added their support for this claim. Hawking himself was confident that the scientific enterprise would one day yield the coveted “theory of everything.” In this sense, the temptation is not simply to rule God out as an unnecessary hypothesis. No, the great temptation is to try and occupy his throne—to usurp the creator.

Certainly, these are grave temptations and no doubt modern science has a distinct tendency to aid and abet them. Still, this seems a rather odd way to greet the vast expansion of our horizons that the modern scientific enterprise has occasioned. What if we saw microscopes and telescopes not merely as goads to idolatry, but instead as force multipliers for wonder? What if we viewed them not as scientific instruments alone, but also as instruments of worship? The psalmist proclaims, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and their expanse declares the work of his hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge (1-2). Our technological advances have revolutionized our ability to see this divine “speech.” One recent example would be the astonishing images from the Webb telescope.¹ From the oceanic vastness of space to the minute intricacies on display in the microscopic realm, the glory of our Lord’s good world has never been more vivid.

Beauty on a Grand Scale

C.S. Lewis bristled at the thought of people calling his three sci-fi novels (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*) the “space trilogy.” (If that’s you, now you know better.) The reason for this is that the word *space* connotes emptiness and vacuity. There are two broad responses to the colossal scale of our universe: wonder and terror. Considering the vastness of space, a writer like H.P. Lovecraft produced a vision of “cosmic horror,” construing humanity as a feeble race marooned in a universe that was equal parts indifferent and hostile. In more recent years, the tagline for Ridley



Scott’s 1979 film *Alien* captures this vision well: “In space no one can hear you scream.” The universe may be seething with malign entities and hostile forms of alien life, but in the end we are alone, our planet an infinitesimal speck in an unfathomably vast cosmos.

A direct challenge to this interpretation arrives in *Out of the Silent Planet*:

A nightmare, long engendered by the mythology that follows in the wake of science, was falling off him. He had read of “Space”: at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now—now that the very name “Space” seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam.²

For Lewis, the vastness and breathtaking intricacy of the universe inspires wonder and reverence. The immensity of our cosmos constitutes an affront only if we overestimate ourselves. That is, if we try to play God, the vast cosmic landscape makes a mockery of our feeble efforts. In this sense, something as grandly ambitious as the “golden record” on Voyager 1 and 2 that’s meant to function as an emblem of human achievement for the benefit of possible alien beings only brings to mind the celebrated final lines of Percy Byssche Shelley’s *Ozymandias*: “Nothing beside remains. Round the decay/Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare/The lone and level sands stretch far away.”³ Here, we might say “the lone stars stretch far away.” But if Christ is indeed on His throne, the boundless majesty of our universe inspires not fear and alienation, but wonder and worship.

Beauty In a Grain of Sand”

Time to bring in another Romantic poet. William Blake opens *Auguries of Innocence* with an exhortation to “see a World in a Grain of Sand.”⁴ This evocative phrase serves as a fitting metaphor for the abounding richness and complexity of the microscopic realm. Thanks

to the increasing sophistication of our microscopic technology, we are now in a position to not only affirm Blake’s insight, but to actually see the “world” in a grain of sand. For that matter, we are able to glimpse many “worlds,” each containing minute expanses invisible to most people down the ages. Our Lord has seen fit to reveal these marvels for such a time as this.

When the sciences are understood as tools for exploring the intricacies of the natural world, whether on the macro or the micro scale, it becomes clear that they need not threaten Christian faith. Far from it, by illuminating the microscopic and macroscopic realms, they can help us to proclaim the exuberance of God’s created order. Seen in this light, the distrust Christians sometimes feel toward the sciences is properly directed at *scientism*—not science. Whereas the scientific enterprise is a powerful tool for exploring and understanding the world around us, *scientism* is a worldview that’s dogmatically committed to the notion that science explains everything. Ironically, the statement “science explains everything” is not itself scientific. Indeed, how would one verify it scientifically? The more sensible view is that science acts as a force multiplier for our sense of wonder at God’s good world.

Notes

- 1 Available online: <https://science.nasa.gov/mission/webb/multimedia/images/>
- 2 C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 34.
- 3 Available online: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias>. You can read about the contents and the vision behind the “Golden Record” here: <https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/whats-on-the-record/>
- 4 Available online: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43650/auguries-of-innocence>

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