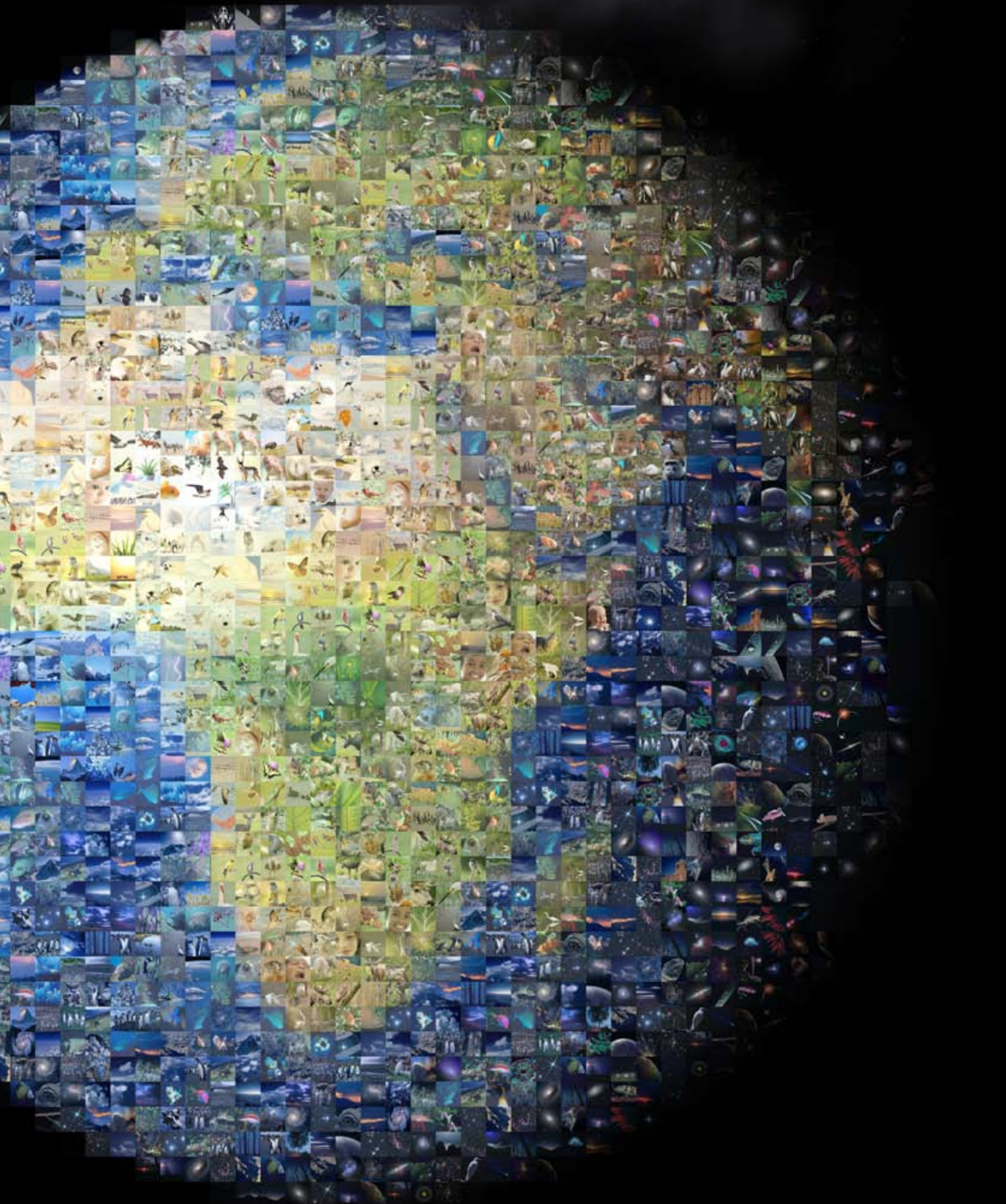


THE CREATOR CLEARLY SEEN

by Jud Davis

Everyone knows there is a God. The evidence is all around us. In fact, the Creator designed the universe so that His many invisible attributes would be “clearly seen” in the things He made, so that we are “without excuse” (Romans 1:20).





“Despite his wonders, they did not believe.” Psalm 78:32, ESV

Theophilus sits in a coffeehouse with a latté and his Bible. His classmate, Epicurus, can't resist needling him, “I don't get you Christians. How can you say that God sends people to hell who have never heard? A God like that can't be true.”

What should Theophilus say? “We don't really know what God does with the unevangelized”?

Romans 1:18–21 has a more direct answer to modern Epicurus. Those who have never heard are willfully guilty for rejecting God because God has revealed Himself clearly in the wonders of creation.

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all impiety and injustice of men, who are seeking to suppress the truth by means of their unrighteous lives.” (Romans 1:18)

God is angry with us. Notice why. God's anger swells up because men are “suppressing the truth.”

The Greek word translated “suppress” means “holding down,” like chains in a prison. This same word was used to describe Joseph's imprisonment in Genesis 39. God seethes with anger because unbelievers attempt to “imprison” the truth by their wicked lives.

Yet no matter how hard people wrestle to suppress God's truth, God will not let them put it in a cage. Humans

are “seeking”—but failing—to suppress the truth.¹

God's anger is not ordinary anger. Paul uses the Greek word *or-gē* for “wrath.” This word comes from the verb that describes fruits swelling with juice. The idea is of a swollen indignation. Our sin against what we *know* about God has reached the point that it would be immoral for God not to act.

This *or-gē* “is being revealed” from heaven.² God lets everyone know about His anger, not just once or occasionally, but continually. All of us know it . . . including Mr. Epicurus.

God directs this wrath against two things—“impiety” and “injustice.”

Impiety, or ungodliness, refers to mankind's failure to fulfill his obligation to his Creator. He holds the very molecules of our bodies together (1 Corinthians 8:4–6), and He enables the neurons in our brains to fire. So we are indebted to God, not just for health and life but for our ability to move and think. In return, we owe our Creator an infinite debt; we owe Him our complete love and devotion. Failure to pay this debt is impiety.

God's indignation also swells against our “injustice.” Injustice refers to our failure to treat other human beings—God's special creations—with the respect that we know they deserve. When we abuse or neglect others, we shred God's *Mona Lisa* and smash His *David* into pieces. We commit a great offense against God's creations, but our offense against their Creator is even greater.

“Because the thing which can be known about God is evident in them, because God made it known to them.” (Romans 1:19)

When we witness to people, we don't have to worry about proving God's existence. According to this verse, God

OUR CREATOR
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makes Himself evident, open, and plain to everyone. He literally placed evidence “in them.” Apparently God placed a knowledge of Himself within all men—inside their minds, in their hearts, in the very core of their being.

The verb is present tense. God did not reveal Himself in the past and then stop. He continues to reveal Himself within us now.

So when people like Epicurus try to appease their conscience and justify their sin, they must suppress their knowledge of God. They grab at straws to patch together a cage around the truth. But God’s truth breaks free, like a tiger ill-suited for captivity.

The King of Heaven does not rely on petty heralds to share who He is. Nor does He post little notes on bulletin boards, hoping we’ll see them. God Himself takes a personal interest in making sure that each one of us has knowledge of Him.

God knows that all people fight against this knowledge. Jesus could say to everyone what He once said to Saul, a zealous Pharisee, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5). He pricks every heart, letting each person know about Him.

The moment God created the world, His creation began proclaiming things about the Creator, and it has continued ever since.

“For his invisible attributes are thoroughly known from the creation of the cosmos, being known by means of the things which have been made, whether his eternal power or divinity . . .” (Romans 1:20a)

What can we see about God? His invisible attributes! The Greek verb *kathoratai* intensifies the standard Greek word meaning “to see.” So we don’t merely “see” God’s attributes, but we literally see them “down” to the core. We clearly perceive, we abundantly know, we thoroughly recognize God’s invisible attributes.

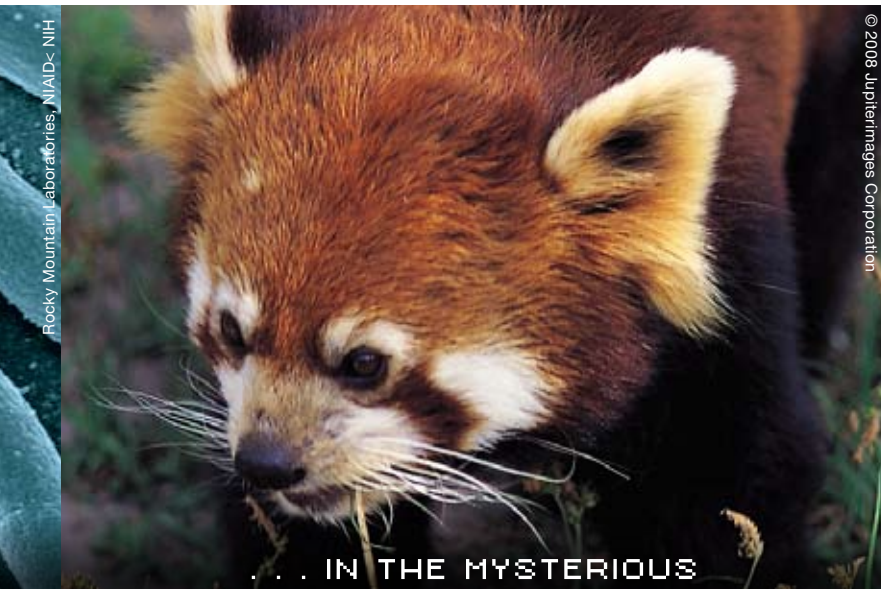
Poor Epicurus was just bluffing. Everyone sees God clearly, even if they never saw a Bible or heard about Him.

God reveals Himself in two ways. One is through the special revelation of the Bible. Through the Bible God spells out the path to salvation (see “Do All Creationists Go to Heaven?”

p. 64). God also communicates through the “general” revelation of creation. While it does not replace the saving truths that mankind must learn in the Bible, creation clearly teaches all men and women that God exists and that certain things are true about Him.

We know these things presently and continually. The moment God created the world (*cosmos* in Greek), His world began proclaiming things about the Creator, and it has continued ever since.

Psalm 19:1–6 is an important Old Testament parallel. God’s creation, surpassing all limits of language, culture, gender, and age, preaches about God constantly and effectively. The world does not need science to acquire knowledge of the Creator. According to the Bible, people already know the Creator and are



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desperately seeking any excuse to dispute His existence. As 2 Peter 3:5 says, “They deliberately ignore” the evidence that everyone plainly sees.

Romans 1:20 spells out the attributes that we can see in the world—God’s eternal nature and divine power. The Greek word for *eternal*, “*a-i-di-os*,” is unusual. It is related to the Greek word meaning “always.” God has caused an “always-ness” to be evident in the created order, and people connect this “always-ness” with the idea of a personal God.

His divinity, deity, divine nature is “*thei-ot-ēs*.” This term summarizes all the attributes that make God who He

is. So God’s revelation of Himself is pretty all-encompassing. (See “Wonder of God” below.)

“. . . so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20b)

These are sobering words. The wonders of God preach His glory to all men. No man or woman can say, “I did not know” or “The revelation was not clear.” This God, who reveals Himself and knows all hearts, concludes of every man, woman, and child, “They are without excuse.”

What can be so plain and evident, when we behold the heavens and contemplate the celestial bodies, as the existence of

some supreme, divine intelligence, by which all these things are governed? Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.2

“For, although they were knowing God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks.” (Romans 1:21)

Not only did we know *about* God at one time, we knew Him in person. We “were knowing God.”

Our modern-day, latté-drinking Epicurus has no right to accuse God of wrongdoing. Epicurus is guilty because he has willfully turned away. His mockery is only bravado, hiding what he knows in his heart about God. He knows that the real debate is not about

WONDER OF GOD

“The heavens are counting out the weightiness of God.” —*literal translation of Psalm 19:1*

King David, the author of Psalm 19, loved to meditate on the truths revealed in God’s Word, but he never lost the thrill of studying God’s creation. Although not equal to the Bible, the creation gives us a visual display of God’s wonderful character.

As Charles Spurgeon noted in *The Treasury of David* (1:269),

“In his earliest days the psalmist . . . had devoted himself to the study of God’s two great books—nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these . . . that he was able . . . to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellency of the Author.”

While the Bible reveals God’s work of redemption in history, the Lord had another grand purpose for creation. It constantly “counts out” the weightiness of God. Like a banker who draws from a limitless vault of gold coins, God’s cre-

ation counts out the Creator’s infinite wonders for all to see.

These evidences are so clear that every human being knows all about God. God made creation this way so that we could fulfill our created purpose as well—we owe God our complete love and devotion, we owe Him honor and thanks, and most of all, we are driven to glorify Him. It is our privilege and duty, as special beings made in God’s image, to count out the weightiness of God.

Before his death at 54 in 1758, the famous theologian Jonathan Edwards began a *Types Notebook*, which he intended to publish as a grand proof that God has clearly revealed Himself through nature. In this notebook, Edwards observed the countless ways that nature proclaimed the glory of God.

Edwards mused on the birth of a child, filthy and helpless at first, yet the object

of a parent’s love. He looked at marriage, the strong desire of a man for a woman. He looked at death itself and saw a divine meaning built into it. If a person rejects God, death helps us to imagine what follows—corruption, a putrefying mess that repulses us all, the darkness of the grave, and isolation. Edwards believed that God communicated things about Himself and mankind in such everyday experiences.

When Edwards looked at a tree, he asked himself questions like, “What is that tree telling me about God?” “What is God’s purpose in making this tree?” “How has God expressed His character here?” “Why are trees so lavish?” “Why are they so diverse?” “Why do trees live in harmony and dependence on other things?”

Such questions led Edwards to a radical love for God, who lovingly filled His creation with profound lessons and elab-

the pagan in Patagonia. It is about sinners in Seattle trying to convince themselves that God does not exist.

God has given us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand. He could have left us in the dark because of our willful effort to cage His truth and because of our impiety and injustice. Yet God wants all to take His free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

God graciously transforms lives that were without form and void—lives dark with the disease of sin and dead to God’s ways, sinking under the abysmal waters of His wrath. This powerful God, who once transformed the empty vastness of space with just a word, is

so great in His mercy that, in spite of our willful ignorance, He sees us in our darkness and cries out, “Let the light of the glorious gospel shine in their hearts!” (2 Corinthians 4:6). ■

NOTES

¹The word *seeking* is not in the original Greek, but the context requires it. (Grammarians call this usage a “conative” present.)

²The sentence implies who is revealing—God—but it does not state His identity (a Greek usage known as “divine passive”).



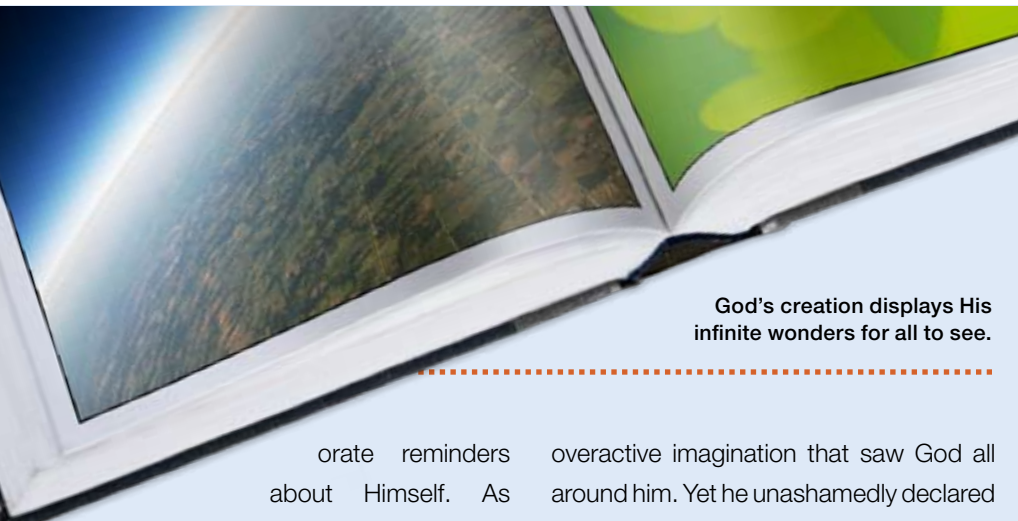
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God’s creation displays His infinite wonders for all to see.

orate reminders about Himself. As Paul put it in Romans 1:20, the “invisible things” of the Creator are “clearly seen” in creation, so we can see His combination of attributes, including love, power, wisdom, and patience.

The more he meditated on God’s creation, the more Edwards realized that it does not offer just a few insights about divine things, but an infinite number. Just as we can never exhaust the wonder of God, we could never learn all the wonders that God has to show us in His creation.

Edwards expected “ridicule and contempt” because of his “fruitful brain” and

overactive imagination that saw God all around him. Yet he unashamedly declared his belief that “the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy Scriptures, be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words.”*

Modern writers are trying to publish a *Reader’s Digest* version of God’s creation that leaves God out of His own book. May every one of us take up Edwards’ challenge to study God’s creation so we can begin to count out His glory—to everyone all around us—as God intended! ■

*Henry Stout, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale, 1993), 11:152.

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