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PREVIEW RESPONSE

Worship, Art, Justice, and Love Are All Modes of Acknowledging Goodness



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Nigel Biggar's theology-brief preview, "Created Order," is an excellent brief statement of the Christian understanding of the created order, along with some helpful suggestions concerning the implications of that understanding for the work of scholars. I affirm everything he says.

In particular, I affirm his emphasis on the presence of embodied goodness in the created order and on the fundamental importance, for how we live our lives, of acknowledging that goodness. In a recent publication of mine, United in Love: Essays on Justice, Art, and Liturgy, I argue that Christian worship, absorbed attention to a work of the arts, acting justly, and love as attraction, are each, at bottom, a mode of acknowledging goodness.

In the last paragraph of his preview, Biggar, after describing Christian academics as "at once aware of their creaturely responsibility under God's created moral order and of their sinful failure to meet it," mentions the virtues that should characterize their work: humility, docility, patience, justice, and charity. I suggest that, given the awareness Biggar mentions of both goodness and sin, there should be, in addition to these virtues, two sorts of experiences that characterize Christian scholars in their work: the experience of *awe*, before the intricacy and immensity of the cosmos and the ability of human beings to understand something of that awesome intricacy and immensity, and the experience of *horror*, when considering what human beings have done to themselves and to the natural world – and to God. There is something seriously deficient in scholars who never experience awe or horror in the course of their work.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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