

God is a Poet: How Art Enlivens Faith

Grow Summer Sessions

Living Waters Church

Peter Morelli

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

—Genesis 1:1

“Heav’n opened wide
Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound
On golden hinges moving, to let forth
The King of Glory in his powerful Word
And Spirit coming to create new worlds.
On heav’nly ground they stood, and from the shore
They viewed the vast immeasurable abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
And surging waves, as mountains to assault
Heav’n’s height, and with the center mix the pole.

“ ‘Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,’
Said then th’ Omnific Word, ‘your discord end:’

“Nor stayed, but on the wings of Cherubim
Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
Far into chaos, and the world unborn;
For chaos heard his voice: him all his train
Followed in bright procession to behold
Creation, and the wonders of his might.
Then stayed the fervid wheels, and in his hand
He took the golden compasses, prepared
In God’s eternal store, to circumscribe
This universe, and all created things:
One foot he centered, and the other turned
Round through the vast profundity obscure,
And said, ‘Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
This be thy just circumference, O world.’
Thus God the heav’n created, thus the earth.”

—*Paradise Lost* (1667), Book VII, lines 205-232, by
John Milton



—“The Ancient of Days,” frontispiece to *Europe: a Prophecy* (1794), by William Blake

“Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.”

–*Biographia Literaria* (1817), Chapter 14, by
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“He that hath ears to hear let him hear”

Matthew 11.15: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

How hard to hear the things I think I know,
To peel aside the thin familiar film
That wraps and seals your secret just below:
An undiscovered good, a hidden realm,
A kingdom of reversal, where the poor
Are rich in blessing and the tragic rich
Still struggle, trapped in trappings at the door
They never opened, Life just out of reach ...

Open the door for me and take me there.
Love, take my hand and lead me like the blind,
Unbandage me, unwrap me from my fear,
Open my eyes, my heart, my soul, my mind.
I struggle with these grave clothes, this dark earth,
But you are calling, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’

—From *Parable and Paradox* (2016), p. 37, by Malcolm Guite

“The Least of All Seeds”

Matthew 13.31–32: Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Least of all seeds; a singularity,
Complete compression of the infinite,
Still point containing all polarity,
Sown in the field of being by your love.
Simplicity begets the intricate;
A coming cosmos, waiting to explode,
Flings out this whirling world in which we move,
Brings us to birth within our own abode.

So too your kingdom comes: a single seed
Too tiny to be seen, sown in the womb,
And then sown deeper still, to meet our need,
A second sowing in the stone cold tomb.
Till in your spring and growth, alive and free,
You raise us to the branches of your tree.

—From *Parable and Paradox* (2016), p. 43, by Malcolm Guite

“Creativity is part of human nature. It can only be untaught.”

—Ai Weiwei

Resources

John Milton. *Paradise Lost*. Norton, 1993.

Malcolm Guite. *Parable and Paradox*. Canterbury Press, 2016.

Robert Alter. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. Basic Books, 2011.