



Summer 2018

Dear listener,

“Creation is a gift of God. Culture is the way we receive and honor that gift.”

Those two claims are on the front panel of a brochure about MARS HILL AUDIO that we’ve been distributing for some time. Taken together, those simple assertions convey a number of assumptions and consequences which are explored in many of the interviews we produce. First among them is that faithful Christian thinking about (and action within) culture requires a recognition of *creation’s ordered goodness*. Each of those three words is essential to cultural faithfulness.

The increased interest in affirming a commitment to the “common good” should include awareness that the goodness we seek to encourage publicly is *creation’s* ordered goodness. If it is truly good, the common good is not established democratically; it does not arise as the sum total of desires asserted by autonomous human wills. Christian commitment to the common good must include an acknowledgment of the triune Creator who is the fountain of goodness. “If the Creator is not known,” warns Oliver O’Donovan, “then the creation is not known *as creation*; for the relation of the creation to the Creator is the ground of its intelligibility as a created universe.”

The relation of the creation to the Creator is a central theme in Colossians 1, in which Christ is identified as the One by whom and through whom and for whom all things were created, and in whom all things hold together, all things sustain their coherence and their intelligibility. To deny Christ is to deny the source of creation’s intelligibility and the cultural consequences thereof.

In my reading and interviews in the past several years, I’ve come to appreciate how many of modernity’s cultural ailments are the product of a faulty understanding of the relation of the creation to the Creator. That was a theme in my interview with Simon Oliver about his book *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (on volume 139) and in Dr. Oliver’s Areopagus Lecture last Fall. (If you missed that talk at the time, you can hear it on our app or website).

A common recognition of the good is possible because creation’s intelligibility and its goodness are interdependent. The common good articulates creation’s *ordered* goodness. “Good is intrinsic to the rational order of the heavens and the earth,” writes Simon Oliver. “Creation is rational not simply because it follows predictable patterns (which is how contemporary science would see the matter), but because it is good.” O’Donovan, in commenting on the divine sources of earthly goodness, reminds us that “Man’s life on earth is important to God; he has given it its order; it matters that it should conform to the order he has given it.”

The order in creation is not arbitrary or mechanical, but an expression of the very life and love of the Triune God. In my interview with Matthew Levering (also on volume 139) about his book *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation*, we talked about his opening chapter, “Divine Ideas,” in which he discusses the mind of God. The order and rationality of creation are a consequence of God’s thought and presence. Following Aquinas, Levering argues that “the divine ideas are not a static data bank that limits God’s creative freedom; they are rather the expression of the simultaneously whole intelligence of the freely personal God whose eternal presencing (not only his will but also his intelligence) is more interior to creation than creation is to itself.”

In emphasizing even more strongly the third word in that phrase, creation’s ordered *goodness*, we’re reminded of the posture of gratitude and wonder that should characterize our cultural lives. Jonathan Wilson, the author of *God’s Good Creation* (interviewed on volume 120) stresses the importance of a “proper grasp of creation as an act of blessing.” If the blessed goodness of creation is not recognized, we will see it merely as a burden or curse, meaningless “nature” awaiting our control. Without an affirmation of the goodness of creation, we lose sight of its beauty. “But if we believe that beauty is inseparable from creation and that beauty is an aspect of the blessing of creation, then any claim to knowing and appreciating beauty must be located within our belief and participation in the work and life of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.”

In the twenty-five years I’ve been doing interviews for MARS HILL AUDIO, one of the most important changes in my thinking is my recognition of how the disorders of modernity arise as the result of bad theology, not because of “godless philosophers” who set out to marginalize religion from public life. It was — as Oliver O’Donovan, Simon Oliver, Matthew Levering, Jonathan Wilson, and others have explained — flawed thinking by Christians about the nature of the relationship between God and Creation that set the stage for what C. S. Lewis called the un-Christening of the West. The challenge we face is to repent of that bad theology and work to re-imagine cultural life within a more faithful framework of theological understanding, beginning with our understanding of creation.

The truth that needs to be publicly articulated by the Church in our moment begins with a Christocentric understanding of creation — *and all that that implies* — without which the Gospel is unintelligible or truncated, and the common good can never be defined or pursued adequately. I’m grateful that many brilliant thinkers have dedicated much time to the hard theological, philosophical, and historical work needed for us to think more clearly about the gift of creation and its proper reception.

MARS HILL AUDIO is committed to promoting faithfulness in the face of the challenges of modern culture, and it seems that those challenges are more critical than they were when we began work in 1993. We have survived this long thanks to your encouragement in prayer and financial support. I hope that you will see fit to continue (and increase!) on both fronts in the spirit of Hebrews 10:24-25.

Gratefully,



Ken Myers

Host and Producer