

Why Are the Birds So Beautiful?

In my study are dozens of learned books which delve into the depths of theology. There are multi-volumed tomes which explore the nature of God. But this morning I want to share with you a most simple and singular theological study.

Every morning at my breakfast table I look out upon the wonders of God, ^{being dramatized} at our bird-feeders. There are at least three birds feeding outside my window that give flight to my mind as I search for the evidences of God Almighty. They are: the Red Wing Blackbird, the brilliant Cardinal, and the two Finches, Gold and Purple. I gaze at them with fixed attention. I am deeply moved by their spectacular beauty. Putting aside all other questions that vex my thoughts, I keep asking: "Why did God, the Creator, make them so beautiful that they stir something deep within my soul?"

The blackbird simply startles me when it spreads its wings to reveal that brilliant ~~mark~~ ^{splash} of red. I wonder: how did that red mark get there?

When that brilliantly ~~red~~ ^{adorned} cardinal swoops down to take the sunflower seeds which I have set out just for him, I look upon a sight so beautiful that something within me is simply stunned. Why, I ask, is that lovely creature so beautiful?

And when I see the tiny finches, both gold and purple, pecking at the special feeder we have ^{hung out} just for them, I want to sing "For the beauty of the earth! For the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth/over and around us lies; Lord of all, to thee we raise/this our hymn of grateful praise.

Or course there are many other marvelous creatures entertaining me just outside my window, but all of them make me wonder about the superfluous beauty with which God has painted his creatures. Why, I want to know, did God make them so unutterably beautiful?

Indeed, God could have made the red-winged blackbird, the cardinal and the finches, with less spectacular colors, much as he created the lowly sparrow and the juncos. But what is there within me that responds in such ecstasy to these brilliant colors?

and ornithologist,

Frank M. Chapman, the famous naturalist¹ has written that birds are "the most eloquent expression of Nature's beauty, joy and freedom."

(National Geographic Song and Garden Birds of North America, p.12)

In watching these gorgeous creatures I deeply believe that I am beholding the eloquent expression of God's nature.

Bird lovers are fond of quoting from one of the declarations in the Bible's Book of Proverbs:

Three things are ^{too} ~~two~~ wonderful for me;

four I ~~don't~~ not understand:

the way of the eagle in the sky,

the way of the serpent on a rock,

the way of a ship on the high seas,

and the way of a man with a maiden. (30:18,19 RSV)

Or listen to the way The Living Bible paraphrases that passage:

There are three things too wonderful

for me to understand - no, four!

How an eagle glides through the sky.

How a ~~serp~~ent crawls upon a rock.

How a ship finds its way across the heaving ocean.

The growth of love between a man and a ^girl.

Those words express how I feel, especially about the suggestion that birds glide so effortlessly through the sky. But even more, It is too wonderful for me to understand why birds, when they spread their wings, are so incredibly beautiful.

That beauty is simply superfluous. By this I mean that that beauty is more than sufficient; it is, indeed, excessive. It is, in fact, extravagant!

I sometimes have the feeling, as I watch these superbly beautiful birds at the feeders we have set out for them, that God is overwhelming me with the evidence of his presence in this world. I then realize that not being too bright and responsive, God has to overwhelm me with his extravagances in order to assure me of his presence in the world.

O yes, there are other voices, in their strong self-assurance, telling me that the notion of God is just that, a mere notion, a figment of my imagination. 3.
These atheists declare that, yes, there was once a "Big Bang," in which countless billions of particles cascaded from nothing and that what I see has no Plan or meaning.

Then I make an astounding discovery about myself, indeed I come to an insight: I am getting this message about God's presence in the world because we set out those bird feeders. By positioning them outside ~~the~~^{our} window we have attracted those birds so that we can look wonderingly upon their extravagant beauty.

Now it is also true that outside that same window I am fascinated by the duller ~~looking~~^{appearing}, less spectacularly colored birds, like sparrows and juncos. And this, too, causes me to gain an insight: obviously I am so ordinary, so colorless, unlike the red-winged blackbird, the brilliant cardinal, and the precious finches, gold and purple. I am more like the simple sparrows and the juncos, ^{state colored, lusterless,} But they, too, are God's precious creatures, and I dare to believe that I am his too. For:

His eye is on the sparrow. . . . (see below)

In Australia I was taken once to see a lovely wooded area. Do you know what it is called? It is called a "bird sanctuary." Well, that priceless small area just outside our window is itself a sanctuary. It is a place I visit every day so that I can meet God.

Come to think of it, that is why we call this very place where we are worshipping, before a holy altar, a sanctuary.

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I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely,
Away from heaven and home?
For Jesus is my portion,
My constant friend is He,
And I know He watches me.
So, I sing because I'm happy
I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know he watches me.