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The Harmony of a God-Soaked Creation

song of a
scientist

Calvin B. DeWitt

Foreword by Bill McKibben

“If God is one, then truth must be one too. Finally both spirituality and science are recognizing that they are peering into the same living well and into the same endless sky. Calvin DeWitt will help you see beautifully in both directions!”

— [Fr.] Richard Rohr, O.F.M.
Center for Action and Contemplation
Albuquerque, New Mexico

“The personal lifelong experiences of Cal DeWitt and those of his friends, students, and acquaintances sing a wonderful song in praise of creation throughout this book. This is a compelling and encouraging word of hope in these days of so much environmental destruction. “

—Professor Sir Ghillean Prance, FRs

“Calvin DeWitt forwards a compelling and engaging argument, defeating the often-heard claim that science and theology are adversaries. In a brilliant and well-documented account, DeWitt makes his point using scientific facts effectively illustrated by his own stories of scientific work. Do not let the title fool you. Thoroughly scientific and unapologetically Christian, this brief “song” presents a serious and poignant work that should help mitigate the unnecessary conflict between science and theology while giving a new and exciting appreciation for creation—the work of God.”

—Bruce Little, Director of the Center for Faith and Culture

“This book is a song that could only be written by an author who is a believer in whose heart has shone the light of the glory of God, and a scientist whose eyes are open to see God’s handiwork in the natural world. It is a song that reproduces the harmony that there is between God’s creation and God’s salvation. Calvin DeWitt has exemplified that harmony in his own life. He is therefore well qualified to challenge us to live out our faith in terms of a harmonious stewardship in this world we share with God’s creatures, great and small. I highly recommend joining him in singing this beautiful song.”

—C. René Padilla, president of the Micah Network and emeritus president of the Kairos Foundation in Buenos Aires

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+ +
SQUARE
INCH
+ +

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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foreword

BY BILL MCKIBBEN

At least since Lynn White Jr.'s famous 1969 essay placing the Genesis call for dominion at the root of our ecological woes, many environmentalists had decided that Christianity was an obstacle to their work—which, with the rise of the religious right in the 1980s, made that work all the more difficult. In fact, there was the strong sense among some campaigners—and among some scientists—that religious communities were natural enemies—uninterested in biology and physics, wedded to literalist interpretation of Scripture.

But there were always at least a few in the evangelical movement determined to heal that breach, none earlier or more effective than Calvin DeWitt (b. 1935).

A mild-mannered Midwesterner with a Ph.D. in zoology, he helped in 1979 to found the Au Sable Institute in northern Michigan. The institute devotes itself to organizing field courses and conferences that teach ecology, always stressing the Christian notion of stewardship, the idea that, as is also written in Genesis, we are to “dress and keep” the fertile earth. Over time, its courses and conferences helped spread the message; in 1993, he was a cofounder of the Evangelical Environmental Network, which ran a campaign to preserve the Endangered Species Act when it came under right-wing Congressional fire. (After all, who was Noah but the first radical green, saving a breeding pair of everything on earth?)

Most of DeWitt’s work, however, has been more patient and nonconfrontational, and it was rewarded perhaps most powerfully in the spring of 2006 when many of the nation’s leading evangelical scholars and pastors signed a statement demanding federal action on global warming. As this book makes so clear, his deep and almost boyish love for creation lies at the bottom of much of his effort. It’s a love I share—the wonder at the sheer beauty and diversity of the world the Lord hath made. Last fall, in California, the two of us were sitting on a bench outside a dorm in a retirement community, waiting to be picked up and taken

to our next talk. Though it was a thoroughly suburban setting, we looked up and at the same moment saw a dog trotting down the street—and at the same moment realized it wasn't a dog at all, but a coyote. We knew it by the saucy confidence of his trot, I think, and the sheer wildness of his bearing; he looked at us as equals. At any rate it made both our days—a small blessing, the kind of grace note the universe sends regularly if you're paying attention.

When I was compiling a vast doorstep of a book for the Library of America a few years ago (it is called *American Earth* and is a compendium of the best environmental writing from Thoreau to the present), I had to include a selection from Cal. It came from a talk that DeWitt gave at a seminar in Ecuador organized by Heifer Project International, a charity with Christian roots that delivers animals, and the principles of careful husbandry, to villagers around the world. It's delivered in DeWitt's trademark calm style—but it's worth noting that he can be roused to anger too. "We've spiritualized the devil," he said recently. "But when Exxon is funding think tanks to basically confuse the lessons that we're getting from this great book of creation, that's devilish work. We find ourselves praying to God to protect us from the wiles of the devil, but we can't see him when he's staring us in the face."

I honor Cal DeWitt for plainspokenness and candor, for patience and the endless ability to carry on dialogue. I honor him most of all for being open to God's world—for being quiet enough to hear the song he describes so beautifully herein.



prelude: song of a scientist

“Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.” This verse from Psalm 111 pretty much sums up my passion in life. And I invite you, dear reader, to join me in conversation through the pages of this book. Like me, I hope you will experience the joy of living as a psalm of praise in a hopeful world. I invite you to join me in singing the Creator’s ineffable love.

With words “springing fresh from the Word,” this book seeks to bring the scientific and the biblical together. Science and theology are written into the same score and sung in multi-part harmony. And as you and I sing from this integral score, we sing along with the vast variety of creatures and their various

kingdoms—plant, animal, protist, and more—that join in myriad ways to bring peculiar honors to our King.

Inspiration for our song does not require a trip to Yosemite or the Grand Canyon. But it does require that we stop—that we pause and take the time to *behold* the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever we call home we can *behold* the creatures that live in lawns and sidewalk cracks, yard and garden. We can behold them as we walk in beauty, whether around the block or on a long journey. From such *beholding* come suites and songs—of canyon or frog, of craton or bog.

I hope sometimes to catch you off guard as you read this book, even to nudge you toward fresh thinking on being guard-eners of land and life. (Already my spelling has caught you off guard!) I also hope that you will discover renewed freshness and deep meaning when praying “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, *on earth . . .*” or when joyfully singing, “Praise God *all creatures* here below!”

This book—coming as it does from the heart of a lifelong investigator—is a book of discovery. Of the things disclosed on these pages, some are new; others are known but discovered anew. You’re invited to wonder as we move together chapter by chapter from “living psalm” to “living psalm.” As we move from

prelude toward conclusion, we will build an understanding of the longstanding tradition of stewardship, and we will come to appreciate the great gift this tradition is to the world. Refreshing our thinking and acting on this great gift is vitally important for our time, as it brings a renewed vision of stewardship within Christianity and also within the wider world. Received and amplified, this gift to the world brings hope to an expectant creation.

—Advent 2011



three songs: wasps, birds, and wolves

As I entered the university cafeteria, some twenty students fell silent. I regularly have coffee with several of them after class, but this morning nearly half the class was waiting for me. They cut short their energetic conversation as they saw me coming. Among the tables they had cobbled together, I saw the vacant chair in the middle. They invited me to sit down. Then one of them spoke for the rest: “Cal, tell us a story!”

With that invitation, these great people—my students—revealed to me something I had not yet realized: I nearly always teach by telling stories. That day I learned from my students that I was a storyteller,

and that people learn best from stories. So I decided to begin this book by telling three stories.

As I reflect on how my Great Teacher also taught by storytelling, my way of teaching makes sense. It also mirrors another characteristic of Jesus' teaching: most often that teaching took place on "field trips" as he moved across the landscape with his disciples, pushed offshore by boat, or sifted kernels of grain through his fingers.

So let me begin by singing to you three "songs."

A Wasp and a Thousand Caterpillars

The birch tree in our front yard had a problem. I walked out the front door, stared at our tree, and saw hundreds of little black stems I had not noticed before sticking out from its branches. I wasn't too worried—until one of the "stems" moved. As I stood motionless, beholding, another moved, then ten, then a hundred!

In fact, these were little creatures, pretending to be stems. Whenever they sensed movement around them, they stood up stiffly, but when the coast was clear, they relaxed and continued their feast on our birch tree and its increasingly holey leaves.

I love that tree. In my mind's eye I could see these tiny worms become flying adults (as all caterpillars do).

Then I envisioned those adults laying still more eggs. I knew I had to do something. Would I, for the first time ever, have to use pesticides?

I sat on the front step of our house, bracing my downcast face between uplifted hands, and prayed. The caterpillars had gotten the best of me. I shook my head . . . here I was, teaching others to be responsible stewards and earthkeepers, and I was seriously considering spraying poison on my lawn—biocide that could be picked up by children’s feet, penetrate their skin, perhaps even find its way into the food chain.

Until an idea came to me that seemed to me then—and still does—a direct answer to prayer. Instead of racing to the store for bug spray and sprayer, I called out to our young son, Gary. I told him I would pay him a penny for each of the first thousand caterpillars he collected, a nickel for each of the next two hundred, and a dime for every one after that. Enthusiastically he called his friends and offered them a half penny for the first thousand, two-and-a-half cents for the next two hundred, and a nickel for every one after that. In the end I owed Gary \$18.50. After a single day of these young children’s diligence, every caterpillar was gone from the tree.

Except for one. Looking at our tree a few days later, I admired the results of my son’s work. And then I saw

it. A black twig changing into a munching worm right before my eye! As a scientist, I had learned to suppress the urge to kill. So I simply watched. Actually I did much more than watch, I *beheld* this remarkable creature! How its jaws worked. How it moved. How it transformed itself from caterpillar to twig and back again. This creature was marvelous . . . absolutely marvelous!

Next an astounding thing happened. In the midst of my long, unmoving beholding, a tiny wasp with a thread-like waist winged its way in, circled around this lonely caterpillar, turned its tail toward it, and sunk its long ovipositor—a long tube that can easily penetrate a caterpillar’s skin—deep into the caterpillar’s flesh! She stuck the caterpillar, and then she pumped her eggs down that tube into the tiny worm. Converting my caterpillar into living food, this *ichneumonid* wasp was continuing its life cycle: laying eggs that produce tiny larvae that metamorphose into wasps. Her children would seek and similarly destroy any other black-twig caterpillars on my birch and the birches of my neighbors. Most of the next round of these caterpillars would be stopped in their tracks as consumers of my birch tree.

My pondering turned to wonder at the wisdom of God. Each creature has its place, but none is given

free reign over birch trees or anything else. Beyond wondering, I thought about stewardship of creation. Colossians 1:15-20 teaches that Jesus Christ is the one through whom God created all things, who holds all things together and reconciles all things to himself. I wondered about this. I wondered about wasps . . . and caterpillars.

I reflected on how every creature works within God's provision of checks and balances in creation. And then I began thinking about thinking. Our minds are gifts we've received in order to discover how the world works, including the wonder of interacting caterpillars and wasps. I reflected too on the commission from God in the second chapter of Genesis to identify and name creatures yet unnamed. From an early age I understood that task as finding meaningful ways to describe these creatures.

Genesis also teaches us that human creatures are made in the image of God—meaning that we are to be mirrors that reflect in multifaceted ways divine knowledge, wisdom, and caring for the world. In that divine wisdom, every creature is blessed with ways of increasing, and yet is constrained from increasing without limit. The stork knows its seasons, the sea knows its boundaries, and the caterpillars are constrained from

totally destroying the vegetation that nourishes their lives. That inspired me to write a kind of riddle:

Ichneumonids: Twigworms' friend.

Ichy ovipositors: Deadly end.

Behold the Birds of the Air

I am a teacher at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and have been a student of God's creation all my life. My family and I attend Geneva Campus Church on the campus of the University of Wisconsin. Several years ago Bill Vander Hoven came into town for three months to fill a pastoral vacancy in Geneva's ministry. I saw him often during student coffee hours at Memorial Union, where he frequently engaged students at neighboring tables. Noting what books they were reading and what subjects they were studying, he would compassionately tailor the good news to their situation. Some days I would move over to his table. Eventually, as we conversed about my love for God and God's creation, he insisted that I take him on a field trip.

That "field trip" began before sunrise and lasted well into the night as we trekked through the wonders of the Baraboo Hills of southern Wisconsin. Later

on he told me that he had truly discovered creation that day, although he had lived within its remarkable embrace for more than sixty-five years. Following our time together, he took a full year off from his “retirement” to study creation—so that he would not have to be embarrassed, as he put it, to be asked in the final Judgment what he thought of creation and have to reply that he had been on but a single field trip!

It’s no accident that Jesus almost always taught on field trips. For the one by whom all things were created, the one who holds all things together, it was a “natural” thing to do! Whether we know it or not, you and I are teachers too. We teach indoors and outdoors; we teach with our words and by our silence, by our actions and by our inactions. Following the Great Teacher and Mentor, we may even lead others—our children, our brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents, and other “students”—along city sidewalks, across school lawns, and through fields and woodlands, teaching as Jesus did. *Follow right behind me here; sit beside me as we look at this lily! Behold and see!*

In our own teaching, we mirror and reflect our Teacher—bringing ourselves and our “students” to experience the remarkable testimony of creation by seeing, hearing, smelling, touching. We may study theology and know the Bible through and through,

but unless we attend to the testimony of his billions of creatures, we may still not truly know our Creator.

On our field trip together, Bill and I were refreshed in this knowledge. The creatures proclaim God's power and divine majesty. The heavens tell the glory of God. All creation sings praise for God's manifest love for the world (Psalm 148). And with the psalmist, we sing our grateful praise for God's provisions for life and breath, everywhere evident (Psalm 104). So numerous and abundant, so interwoven with each other are these provisions, that we cannot give them or their Maker their proper due. God's bountiful care is simply inexpressible:

*Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.¹*

"Field trips" that engage our beholding can bring us awareness of creation and of God's sustaining action in the world. But these are only the beginning of our understanding. Awareness leads to appreciation of God and creation, and appreciation can lead to stewardship—stewardship of creation, of all its materials and energy, of God's provisions for the myriad of

BOTANY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Part First.

HOW PLANTS GROW.



CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD,
HOW THEY GROW: THEY TILL NOT, NEITHER
DO THEY SPIN: AND YET I SAY UNTO YOU,
THAT EVEN SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY
WAS NOT ABRAVED LIKE ONE OF THESE.—
Matthew vi. 28, 29.

OUR LORD'S direct object in this lesson of the Lilies was to convince the people of God's care for them. Now, this clothing of the earth with plants and flowers—at once so beautiful and so useful, so essential to all animal life—is one of the very ways in which He takes care of his creatures. And when Christ himself directs us to consider with attention the plants around us, — to notice how

2

This is the first page of Asa Gray's *Botany for Young People*. Page 2 continues: "And when Christ himself directs us to consider with attention the plants around us, —to notice how they grow, —how varied, how numerous, and how elegant they are, and with what exquisite skill they are fashioned and adorned, —we shall surely find it profitable and pleasant to learn the lessons which they teach. ...This book is intended to teach Young People how to begin to read, with pleasure and advantage, one large and easy chapter in the open Book of Nature; namely, that in which the wisdom and goodness of the Creator are plainly written in the Vegetable Kingdom." This book was published in 1872.

wonderful creatures that inhabit the earth (including ourselves!). Here is one way to express this equation of paying attention:

- (1) Awareness = seeing, identifying, naming, locating
- (2) Appreciation = tolerating, respecting, valuing, esteeming, cherishing
- (3) Stewardship = conserving, restoring, serving, keeping, entrusting

Awareness means getting out of our offices, shops, labs, classrooms, and houses: leaving the virtual “worlds” that may engage and sequester us in order to know and to name the creatures we see—providing ourselves and others the peace and reflective time to discover God’s marvelous work.

Appreciation means tolerating and even cherishing all God’s creatures and creation: beholding and respecting such creatures as wasps and caterpillars, wolves, hippos, and toads—giving ourselves and others the opportunity to echo God’s declaration “It is good!”

Stewardship means appropriate use, caregiving, and conserving creation. It means assuring that our own and others’ actions do not damage creation but repair

the damage done and directing ourselves and others to pursue and spread right living in the world.

It means serving, which includes serving before we act adversely on creation (*pre-serving*); serving reciprocally so that service to us by God and creation is returned with service of our own (*con-serving*); bringing back to fullness and fruitfulness what has been damaged and smeared (*re-serving, restoring, reconciling*). It also means helping our community hold in trust what we and others have learned, preserved, conserved, and restored (*en-trusting*)—serving God responsibly and worthily by tending, caring for, and keeping God’s Word and God’s world.

So far I’ve emphasized the importance of reading creation through “field trips.” But we cannot go on field trips without an indispensable guidebook, the book of Scripture. The Bible gives us insight into the basic questions “Who am I?” and “What are people for?” And it requires us to step out of the busyness of life, to “take up and read.” This book, by which God makes himself more clearly and fully known to us, is absolutely vital.

The book of Scripture illuminates the testimony of creation by revealing the Creator as the one who personally addresses us with the good news of God’s saving power and love. Here too, awareness moves

us toward appreciation and ultimately on to stewardship—bringing good news to every creature, inspired by the life and testimony of Jesus Christ, the one by whom God created, sustains, and reconciles all things. This book of Scripture invites us to participate in its vision of justice and peace, upholding the integrity of creation. It motivates and moves us toward fulfillment of the purpose of creation by teaching us to understand God’s love for the world and our human purpose in creation as we pray “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

An essay by Anglican Bishop N. T. Wright presents a helpful image.³ Wright has us imagine a five-act Shakespearean play that has full text available for the first four acts, but only the first part of the fifth act. From the available text we realize that this play is building with a “crescendo of excitement” toward comprehensive fulfillment in Act 5. Although incomplete, it is such a good play that we decide to perform it. But what about the fifth act? We’d have to start by finding actors who have made it their life’s work to carefully and thoroughly study and understand Shakespeare, and have them thoroughly study and understand this text. Then we’d have these actors complete and perform the fifth act. If these actors were extremely well-versed and thoroughly committed to their task,

we would fully expect the conclusion of Act 5 to gloriously fulfill the expectation of the first four-and-a-half acts in a grand symphonic finale!

Wright identifies the first three acts as themes from the Old Testament: creation (Act 1), fall (Act 2), and Israel (Act 3). The New Testament gospels about Jesus form Act 4, and the remainder of the New Testament forms the first scene in Act 5, “giving hints as well of how the play is supposed to end.” But the story isn’t over. And so the church is “required to offer something between an improvisation and an actual performance of the final act.”

Wright’s image helps us to understand Scripture not as a finished book bound in black that tells an ancient story, but rather as a story that continues right now in our lives today. *We* are actors in the ongoing story of the Creator’s love and salvation. As these knowledgeable and faithful actors, it is our privilege and task “to be the people through whom this extraordinary vision comes to pass.” Thinking this way makes it absolutely clear that we need to hold together coherently the two books of creation and Scripture—both in the present and in continuity with the kingdom of God that has come, and also is coming.

In all of this, the Bible asks the question, “What are people for?” At the same time, it also presents what we

need in order to discover the answer. Taken together, both books anticipate the “actors” as they “enter the stage” to perform in the *theatrum gloriae Dei*—the theater of God’s glory, as John Calvin calls the creation—as they pick up the script and fulfill the expectation of God’s kingdom, anticipating the coming of the children of God.

And yet all of this is but a beginning. Beyond our beholding of birds and lilies, the gospel calls us to “Behold the Lamb of God . . .” (John 1:29, KJV). Beholding the Lamb of God, like beholding creation, can move us from awareness to appreciation and stewardship. And it can move us further yet from being spectators in the audience to active participants on the stage, to joining with enthusiasm, competence, and joy the fifth act now in progress!

Gardener Risen: From death’s prison.

Behold and see: Flower and bee.

Two books prism: Refrain from schism.

Gardeners we: Stewards be.

Life as a Psalm to the Lord

Some years ago, I was driving north from Edmonton to visit a Canadian farm family on the 54th paral-

lel and anticipating afternoon tea. As I approached Neerlandia I was startled by a timber wolf crossing the road in front of me. I was even more startled a few minutes after I arrived by the farmer's answer to my anxious question "Do you have timber wolves around here?" His excited yes told me that he and his family treasured the timber wolf as one of God's creatures to be kept in trust, along with the land they held, for the Creator.

Equally startling was the discovery that this farm family allowed barley fields to lie fallow every second year, providing rest for the land. They did this, the farmer explained, because the Bible teaches it. He recounted passages from Exodus and Leviticus concerning fields and harvest, quoting Exodus 23:10: "For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused." He pointed out Leviticus 25:2b, where God requires that "the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the LORD."

"But why every second year instead of every seventh?" I asked. To which the farmer replied, "You remember Christ's teaching about how the Sabbath is made for people, and not the other way around? The same is true for the land. The Sabbath is made for the land, not the land for the Sabbath." Again I asked, "But

why every second year?" He replied, "Because that is what this land needs."

We walked from house to barn, moving through the farrowing pens and past rooms of pigs and piglets, emerging from the hog house to the outdoor fold. There, in billows of sweet fresh hay, lay resting sows enjoying their Sabbath—God's creatures all. For this Neerlandia farmer, worship was a way of life. Worship with the congregation was vitally important to him and to the fabric of this Alberta farm. But so too was how the hogs and wild creatures were kept and nurtured, how the family was nourished through Scripture and prayer, how their minds were fed with wisdom preserved in books of science and theology. This family took seriously the biblical admonition not to add house to house and field to field (Isaiah 5:8). Here the moose had their own forty acres and the land surrounding the house included a native garden of forest plantings preserved from the plow. Life on this farm was a psalm to the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth. Life here was truly full-orbed worship.

On a neighboring farm that evening, I shared dinner with still another worshiping family. Their lives of gratitude and praise incorporated three summer weekends to sing psalms and hymns to their Creator while backpacking in the Canadian Rockies. On this

farm they delighted in Holsteins but also in the coyotes God had placed under their care.

On these farms, as elsewhere, Christian worship has a vital connection with creation—for good reason. God’s power to save through Jesus Christ and God’s power to inspire through the Holy Spirit derive from the divinity and power of the Creator of all things. Only the one whose power and wisdom created the world can save it. In theological terms, the doctrine of creation leads directly to the doctrine of salvation, and Jesus Christ stands at the fulcrum of both.

The Maker, who formed the world with marvelous integrity and who saves the world through divine love, is the one from whom all blessings flow. In response, we and all creatures return gratitude and our praise. Living becomes worship; life becomes a *public-ation* (making public) of praise to God. Lavishing blessings on land and life, God waters the earth and cares for the creatures—even for carnivores “who seek their food from God” (Psalm 104:21). Delighting in all creatures, God sharpens our eyes to see their integrity and beauty—even of Behemoth, its massive body, amazing skeletal strength, and fearless behavior, all of which are wonderfully harmonized for its challenging wetland habitat (Job 40:15-24). All creation returns its psalms of praise: “All you fruitful trees and cedars, every hill

and mountain high, creeping things and beasts and cattle, birds that in the heavens fly . . . ,” and so do “young men and maidens, aged men and children small.”⁴

Creation matters. It matters not only because it is created and sustained by God. And not only because of its outpouring of praise. It also matters because God became flesh for our sakes. Expressing all-embracing love for the world, God affirms the material world through Christ’s incarnation. Birthed in flesh and cradled in a feeding box for animals, Christ enters as a material person in a material world—God with us. Expressing God’s love for the cosmos, Christ died in the flesh, is raised in the flesh, and ascends in the flesh to the throne room of heaven. Through all of this he brings the promise of human salvation and resurrection—in material flesh. Material creation is affirmed by the incarnation; it is vindicated by Christ’s resurrection. Heaven and nature sing!

Material creation declares God’s glory (Psalm 19:1), publishing far and wide God’s everlasting power and divinity so effectively that all are left without excuse (Romans 1:20). Hand in hand with the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of all things, farmers, artists, woodworkers, and dressmakers also proclaim the glory of God by shaping, using, caring for, and keeping

God's creation. They proclaim it by living their lives as psalms of praise and thanksgiving for God's love for the world.

Worship in the congregation rejuvenates and inspires us to continue our praise in life and landscape. Congregating, we are fed with the Word and inspired by the Holy Spirit to follow the Servant (Philippians 2:5-7) and Reconciler (Colossians 1:20). We are encouraged to follow the One who makes all things new (Revelation 21:5), to follow the One by whom and for whom all things were created and in whom all things have their integrity (John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:15-17; Proverbs 8). Congregating, we elevate our awareness of and appreciation for both the Creator and the creation. And we are empowered to do God's work in the world—serving and keeping the garden with which we have been entrusted.

Even on Easter, that quintessential celebration of Christ's victory and our salvation, we sing creation's invitation to join the celebration: "All creation, join to say, Alleluia! Raise your joys and triumphs high; Alleluia! Sing, O heavens, and earth, reply: Alleluia!"⁵ All creation awaits Christ's coming again. Standing on tiptoes, neck outstretched, creation eagerly waits for the coming of the children of God (Romans 8) and

joins the song: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Praise God all creatures here below!”

Worship—within the congregation and in creation—allows us to practice a life of praise, publishing the glory of God in field and forest, mine and mountain, town and city.

Later on, walking from house to barn, after hearing how much this Neerlandia farmer loved the wolves, doxology broke forth from my heart. I heard praise ascending to God from that wonderfully tended farm; I heard praise ascending to God from creatures who dwell with us on earth below, whom we embrace, as God does, with love and care.

World-renowned environmental scientist Cal DeWitt is widely regarded as a pioneer in opening the eyes of the Christian community to the wonders of God’s creation and the dangers of its degradation by human beings. With a rare combination of scientific rigor, poetic imagination, and a deep Christian faith, DeWitt probes the twin books of God’s Word and God’s world, nudging us toward grateful stewardship and dazzled praise, joining the doxology of all creation.

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“In this book Cal DeWitt looks at nature through the eyes of the Creator, the eyes of a scientist, and the eyes of the psalmist. As you read, you will hear the heartbeat of God, the groans and hopes of a scientist, and a lilting rendering of songs of awe and wonder at God’s marvelous creation!”

—Prof. Jeyakar Chellaraj, former honorary director of the Heber Au Sable Institute (India), and principal of Bishop Heber College in Tiruchirappalli, India

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