



Walter R. Hearn

## The Good, the True, and the Beautiful

**T**he editor has announced that he will begin including in the journal samples of art work related in some way to the science/faith issues with which *PSCF* readers are already familiar. His proposal, made at the ASA annual meeting in Colorado, struck me as appropriate but possibly risky.

I thought immediately of how many times a speaker or an entire audience at that meeting responded to a projected image of a spiral galaxy or some other feature of God's astronomic universe with the words, "How beautiful!" or with a silent gasp expressing the same emotion. I thought of the magnificent harmony of great hymns of praise rising upward from our congregation of believers.

I also thought of the divine choreography taking place in the lives of some ASA members who shared their stories with me. The God whom we worship is Lord not only of What is True and What is Right but also of what is appropriate, satisfying, colorful, symmetrical, neat, patterned, refreshing, exciting, awe-inspiringly fit for enjoyment by his children: in short, of What is Beautiful.

Some ASA members think we best integrate scientific work and spiritual life by trying to approach those two aspects in basically the same way. Others see the methods required as distinct, with integration occurring only in the total life of individuals repeatedly having to choose between goals. If artistic appreciation is considered a third aspect, the conversation becomes more complicated. Do we approach all three in essentially the same way to unite the Good, the True, and the Beautiful? Or do we acknowledge our need for a third way of thinking, a third mode of response to our Creator and Redeemer?

It seems risky to introduce a new question before settling an old one. Consensus is notably hard to reach on questions of artistic taste. Never mind. Let's regard bringing art into *PSCF* as an experiment of sorts. We do not know how it will turn out, which is true of any experiment worth doing.

Let's face it: there is "high art" and "folk art," like real science and "folk-science," professional theology and "folk theology." Compare these expressions: "So what if I've had only one course in biology? I know what I think about evolution." "Who cares when theologians disagree? What counts is my faith in Jesus Christ as Savior." "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like."

The practice of making art differs from the theory of art (aesthetics) as much as experimentation differs from theorizing, or as practicing one's faith differs from theological disputation. I doubt that our editor wants to stir up a theoretical argument about art in relation to science or Christian faith. He may not have in mind a cerebral exercise of any kind. I think he wants ASA to get some practice at experiencing art to add to our hands-on participation in scientific work and our communal life as followers of Jesus Christ.

My own experience of artistic creativity has been primarily in the writing of poetry, from which one learns about symmetry and fitness and figures of speech. With almost a third of the Old Testament in poetic form, a better appreciation of that art form might clear up our understanding of many biblical passages.

So I, for one, welcome this new experiment in the pages of *PSCF*. But I have been thinking about these matters for a long time (as in my article, "The Meaning of Creation," *JASA* 18, no. 1 [1966]: 25-8). ★

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