



James C. Peterson

Learning of God from Creation

If one just starts with nature to discern what one can about the character of its creator, it gives a confusing message of splendid sunrises and painful parasites. But if one knows God the Creator because God has been revealed through Jesus Christ and his people, and then studies God's creation, one may learn and appreciate more of God.

If we know God is the creator, we can gain some experience of God's immense power when measuring the height of Mount Everest or hiking the geology of the Grand Canyon. New discoveries further that awareness. Think of the Hubble Space Telescope peering into the deep space field. We now calculate that beyond our galaxy of about 200 billion stars, there are two trillion more galaxies. Seeing the vastness of space all the way to the furthest galaxy that we have seen thus far, reveals not only a greater sense of how powerful the Creator is, but also some of the magnitude of what it means to say that God has revealed that God is fully present in every place. That God is fully present, both here and at the furthest known galaxy—MACS0647-JD, stretches our perception of God's omnipresence.

We know from the Christian scriptures that God, time and again, prefers to start small and build over time. The people of Israel traced their roots to one couple, Abraham and Sarah. The Exodus began with a baby in the rushes of the Nile River. The church grew from twelve disciples to 70, then to two and a half billion. It is not surprising to see that God who chooses to build over time, has created our material world over even longer periods of time. The great age of the earth measured in so many jointly confirming ways such as by the varves of Lake Suigetsu described in this issue, reminds us that God's experience of time is vastly different from ours. As we look at the life cycle of stars and the rate of expansion of the universe, our universe appears to be about 13.8 billion years old. Learning more of our natural world, brings to attention more of what it means to describe God as fully present in all times, and across time.

We read in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that "Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror dimly; but someday we shall see face to face, and know as deeply as we have been known." Since the Middle Ages, St. Augustine has been described as seeing a little girl quite industriously marching into the surf to fill her pail with water and then back up the beach to pour the water into a dip in the sand. The story goes that he stopped at a nonthreatening distance, and asked, "Excuse me, but what are you doing?" The little girl raised the pail up with confidence and said, "Today, I am going to empty the ocean with my pail."

I can picture that the girl felt the waves tugging at her feet. She knew the taste of salt water on her tongue. She could hear the roar of the surf. She could see the blue water stretching to the horizon. She knew the ocean with every sense she had, and as completely as she could. But she did not even begin to conceive that the water stretched all the way to the other coasts. She had no inkling that in the water before her there were mountain ranges and canyons, whales and walruses, icebergs and tropical islands. There is a parallel here with how we know God. All who God is—beyond any one way of knowing, and even with all our ways of knowing together—ultimately, is beyond our current best human comprehension, but we can truly know God with all the ability that we have, including from our ability to experience nature. If one knows God by God's self-revelation, one can then recognize God's presence in the serene moonrise rippling across a lake, and in the fierce, and as it turns out, life-giving, forest fire.

Living in this material world is a generous and complicated gift that can enrich our understanding and experience of God. What we discover and experience of our material world through the sciences, can sometimes help us to recognize more of its Creator.

✱

James C. Peterson, *Editor-in-Chief*

RESOURCES FOR GUIDING YOUNG SCIENTISTS

Books *for* Emerging Adults

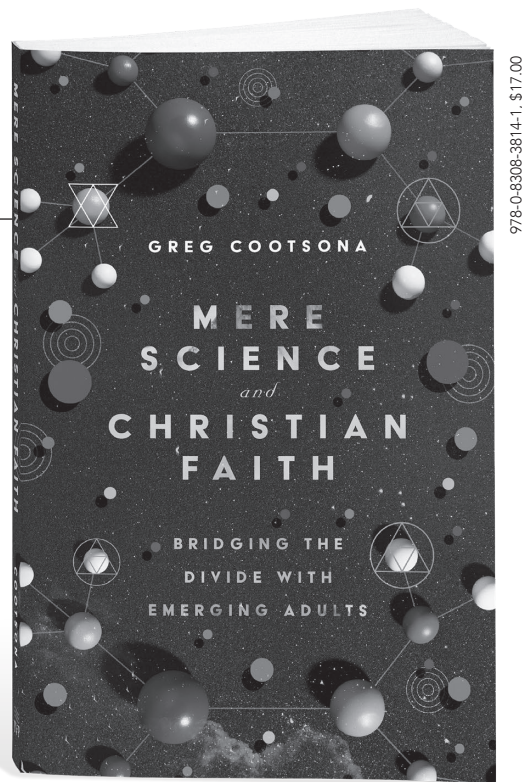
MERE SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

By **Greg Cootsona**

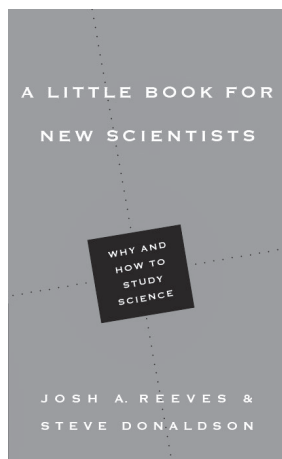
"Greg Cootsona has been consistently at the vanguard of interconnections between science, faith, and the arts. Now with *Mere Science and Christian Faith*, he again proves to be a go-to resource for how science and faith together can offer generative solutions."

MAKOTO FUJIMURA

Brehm Center, Fuller Theological Seminary



978-0-8308-5144-7, \$12.00



ALSO AVAILABLE

*A Little Book
for New Scientists*

IVP Academic | ivpress.com