

Looking back on Looy's 2013 contribution, I see an example of how we, as Christians, can use all the tools in our epistemological toolbelt to leverage the contributions of science and theology humbly and confidently for the benefit of our neighbor and our world.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-23Kaita>

2014

OWEN GINGERICH, "Do the Heavens Declare the Glory of God?," *PSCF* 66, no. 2 (2014): 113–17.

A scientist once mentioned to me that he didn't want to tell his young son that God created the universe. If he did so, the scientist explained, it would take away the awe and wonder he wanted his child to feel. I was taken aback when I heard this. I have given many talks where I showed beautiful images from space, motivated in part by my role – albeit modest – on the Voyager spacecraft sent to the far reaches of the solar system. I always assumed that they are a wonderful illustration of God's creation, never considering the possibility that anyone could come to the diametrically opposite conclusion.

My experience made me think more carefully about what the psalmist meant when he wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God." Owen Gingerich frames the passage in the form of a question in the title of his *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* essay, and I immediately sensed that Gingerich appreciated my challenge by its very first lines. "[A] congregation would be shocked if [Gingerich] simply said 'yes' and sat down. On the other hand, [they] would all be even more stunned if [he] said, 'No, the heavens do not declare the glory of God,' and sat down. So, [he thinks] you can safely deduce that there is something more to be said about the psalmist's ancient declaration."

Gingerich begins by reminding us that our predecessors did not see the universe as we do. From reckonings made in the sixteenth century, the sun was estimated to be much closer than it actually is. The "shell of stars" just beyond that encloses our solar system is impressive, but God, to quote Gingerich, was "not so far away." We now know

that our universe stretches to a horizon nearly 14 billion light years away. Such a vast distance would have been inconceivable to the psalmist. Perhaps only modern science then, and not the faith of the ancients, can let us appreciate how truly awesome our universe is.

Not so fast, Gingerich warns us. Modern science also tells us what we need for our existence. For example, carbon and oxygen are the building blocks of life as we know it. The so-called energy levels in the carbon nucleus, however, are just right for oxygen to be formed in stars and end up on Earth. Similarly, physical constants also have been constrained within very tight limits for life to exist in our universe. To a physicist like me, such details are as awe-inspiring as the starry skies in displaying what God has done.

Fred Hoyle, the famous cosmologist and "public skeptic" as Gingerich calls him, writes, "There are very many skeptics of the universe where you either have to say there have been monstrous coincidences, where there might have been, or, alternatively, there is a purposive scenario which the universe confirms" (*The Origin of the Universe and the Origin of Religion* [Wakefield, RI: Moyer Bell, 1993], 83). Unlike Hoyle, Gingerich asserts that he isn't "sitting on the fence" when it comes to purpose behind the universe. He concludes by simply saying that "the sheer beauty of the heavens declares the glory of God!" I still lecture on how the majesty of God's universe reflects this, but thanks to Gingerich's essay, with a richer and more humble understanding of why.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-23vanderMeer>

2018

ALAN DICKIN, "New Historical and Geological Constraints on the Date of Noah's Flood," *PSCF* 70, no. 3 (2018): 176–93.

Alan Dickin's article about Noah's flood filled in the last opening of a puzzle for me. I have viewed this flood as a local one for a long time. But there was a problem. If it was local, why are flood stories found globally? Alan explained this convincingly. Briefly, there was a flooding of the Euphrates River brought about by a combination of a rising sea level