

## God's Flaming Glory – Post 8 – God's Glory in Creation, According to Albert Mohler – Part 2

\*Continuing the critique of Mohler's doctrine of glory begun in Post 7\*

### *Creation: the Stage*

When Albert Mohler speaks of God's glory being manifested to human beings, he sees it primarily in theatrical terms (demonstration and display, for example, are two terms that come up again and again in Mohler's work in this area). Human beings are made to see the *display* or *demonstration* of God's glory – to “*have a glimpse of the glory*” of the Triune God. God *demonstrates* who He is as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This way of talking about God's glory in all things reflects an understanding of God that sees Him primarily as a Creator who redeems.

When Mohler speaks of creation, therefore, he speaks of it as a theater and as a stage on which God is the Actor:

...the earth, and beyond it the entire cosmos, was created *primarily* as a theater. . . the entire creation . . . is *the necessary staging* for God to do something that will bring Him even greater glory, and that is to redeem sinful humanity through the blood of His own Son. In other words, as John Calvin made very clear, we are to see *the cosmos as the theater of God's glory*... it's where the story is going to be told. It's where the story will happen. It will happen on *a stage*. And that is what creation is. *Creation is a stage on which a story happens*. And what is the story? The story is God glorifying Himself by saving humanity such that He is known not only as Creator but also as Redeemer. ...the entire cosmos in general, and planet earth in particular, ...were created in order that God

might create *the very theater, the scenery, the stage* on which He will act to His own glory.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Creation: the Display***

Where does Mohler differ from John Calvin? In Mohler's very definition of God's glory as a theatrical reality. Preaching on Genesis 1, Mohler defined God's glory as the demonstration of His sovereignty: "...God's glory, *which is the demonstration of His sovereignty*, is in the regularity and the differentiation of kinds..."<sup>2</sup> This is at variance with Calvin, though Mohler claims to agree with Calvin. To reiterate, this definition of glory is grounded in God as Creator first and foremost, as Mohler says in another place:

"God's glory is a creational glory. God's purpose in creation was to glorify Himself in everything that we see such that in objects animate and inanimate throughout all creation... Calvin put it this way: 'the faithful to whom He has given eyes see sparks of His glory, as it were, glittering in every created thing. *The world was no doubt made that it might be the theater of Divine glory.*'"<sup>3</sup>

In another sermon already referenced, he defined God's glory as "the great summary of His greatness. The great summary and conclusion to the perfection of His perfections."<sup>4</sup> Chief among His perfections is His sovereignty and holiness which is revealed in His power and character: "...God's *sovereignty and holiness* are displayed even as *the drama* of redemption

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Mohler. (2013, March 24). 2. *Genesis 1:2*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis,9:56-11:31>. Emphasis mine.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Mohler. (2013, April 14). 3. *Genesis 1:3-19*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis,25:45-26:01>. Emphasis mine.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Mohler. (2015, April 8). *Albert Mohler: In the Beginning: The Glory of God from Eternity*. Albertmohler.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6Fy2vX2sRY,41:24-43:08>.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Mohler. (2015, April 8). *Albert Mohler: In the Beginning: The Glory of God from Eternity*. Albertmohler.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6Fy2vX2sRY,21:01-21:14>.

demonstrates God's *power* and *character*."<sup>5</sup> In other words, through God's power and moral character He is glorified as sovereign and holy. All His attributes testify to those two central attributes demonstrated in His power and character, and vice versa:

*God's attributes reveal His power and His character....*

At the foundation of all the attributes ascribed to God in Scripture are two great truths which form central pillars for all Christian thinking. *The first of these is God's total, final, and undiluted sovereignty... The second of these great pillars is God's holiness.* Just as sovereignty is the great term that includes all of God's attributes of power, holiness includes all of the moral attributes ascribed to God in the Bible . . . In the end, *God is not so much defined by these moral attributes as much as he defines them by the display of his character* in the Bible.<sup>6</sup>

This kind of glory has a specific manifestation for Mohler. Because God is sovereign, God's character is one of *order*, and not disorder. *Order* is another word for the way things are supposed to work, function, and relate to other things. Order is the beauty of creation as order reflects the character of the sovereign God. Because God's glory is His sovereignty and greatness, God is most glorified when everything is rightly ordered. Compare this to John Calvin who, as we saw, believed that God's intention in creating and maintaining the universe was to *communicate* to His children His Fatherly care *in* His holiness, sovereignty, and power.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Albert Mohler. (2011, January 11). *The Christian Worldview as Master Narrative: Redemption Accomplished*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/2011/01/10/the-christian-worldview-as-master-narrative-redemption-accomplished>.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Mohler. (2010, December 3). *The Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God: Starting Point for the Christian Worldview*. Albertmohler.com. [https://albertmohler.com/2010/12/03/the-knowledge-of-the-self-revealing-god-starting-point-for-the-christian-worldview?\\_ga=2.115286791.162610242.1624222422-425716107.1620216971](https://albertmohler.com/2010/12/03/the-knowledge-of-the-self-revealing-god-starting-point-for-the-christian-worldview?_ga=2.115286791.162610242.1624222422-425716107.1620216971). Emphasis mine.

<sup>7</sup> See *God's Flaming Glory – Post 3 – God's Glory in Creation, According to Calvin*.

This is a major theme throughout Mohler's theology, and it is nowhere more evident than it is in his preaching through Genesis. Take this quote, for instance:

One of the things to note is that the major theme here [Genesis 1:2-3] is *the sovereignty of God in bringing order out of disorder* . . . . Wherever we find *order*, *there* we are going to find *testimony to the perfection of the sovereignty of God*.<sup>8</sup> . . . . God's purpose is never chaos. God's purpose is to bring *order out of disorder*. To bring *the beauty of creation out of the chaos of unorganized matter* that previously existed<sup>9</sup> . . . . whoever would try to bring disorder out of order is actually sinning. Whoever is trying to blur the distinctions, to deny the distinctions that God has made in creation, is doing work that opposes what God was doing to His own glory.<sup>10</sup>

God's glory, which is His sovereignty, is discernible by His passion for a rightly regulated universe. That regulation is one of goodness and abundance, as Mohler makes clear in his sermons on Genesis 1 and 2. Yet the final purpose God had for it all, as he explains, is the regulation of it in and of itself. The purpose of all of creation's vast complexities is found in being rightly ordered and regulated, and is beautiful *only because* it is ordered and regulated.

God's intended purpose in the creation of the universe is that it might accurately display His character as the God of sovereign orderliness, and to that established end He redeems humanity:

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<sup>8</sup> Albert Mohler. (2013, April 14). 3. *Genesis 1:3-19*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis, 2:30-3:11>. Emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup> Not that God came across it and then did something with it, as he clarifies in the next sermon [Albert Mohler. (2013, April 14). 3. *Genesis 1:3-19*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis, 6:20-6:30>].

<sup>10</sup> Albert Mohler. (2013, March 24). 2. *Genesis 1:2*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis, 12:09-13:00>. Emphasis mine.

...The product of God's creative activity is a universe of seemingly infinite variety, complexity, and mystery . . . Thus, creation is not a brute fact without meaning. It derives its meaning from the divine character and will. As the theater of God's redemptive activity, creation is not static, but is moving toward that goal established by decree before the foundation of the universe.<sup>11</sup>

This view is radically different than that of Calvin's view of God's glory in creation. As said in Post 3, Calvin saw God's glory in creation as a beauty of generous goodness to humanity.

<sup>12</sup> The whole point and pinnacle of a rightly ordered universe was for human beings "to keep close to God."<sup>13</sup> God's glory wasn't fundamentally *in* creation, or primarily about a duty to be fulfilled.<sup>14</sup> When Calvin looked at creation, God's glory wasn't to be found in the order and immensity of the universe. God's glory was seen in that God had provided an immense abundance of goodness to humanity revealed in the order and immensity of the universe:

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<sup>11</sup> Albert Mohler. (2010, December 18). *The Christian Worldview as Master Narrative: Creation*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/2010/12/15/the-christian-worldview-as-master-narrative-creation>.

<sup>12</sup> In contrast to this, Albert Mohler put the importance of God rightly ordering everything in creation as primary. For example, Mohler preached that "...fruit is a seed delivery system... Its *seed* – that's the purpose of the tree. The tree is a seed delivery system and the fruit is the specific mechanism whereby it is delivered. In other words, when you create a seedless orange, you have just defied the very purpose of an orange existing. The orange fruit existed in order to bear the seed . . . the 'each according to its kind' is very important because that means that the kinds themselves are important *and* the differentiation between them is important to the Creator" [Albert Mohler. (2013, April 14). *3. Genesis 1:3-19*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis, 26:16-27:29>].

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin (n.d.). *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Grand Rapids, MI. p. 167.

Again, Rolston agrees with this assessment of Calvin. Quoting Calvin, he writes that "A steady 'communion with God was the source of life to Adam'" [Holmes Rolston III. (1972). *John Calvin Versus The Westminster Confession*. John Knox Press. Richmond, Virginia. p. 25].

<sup>14</sup> Again, in contrast to Calvin, Albert Mohler had this to say when preaching on Genesis 2:5, "What in the world is that about? You have plants but they're not growing; you have bushes that are not in the land, no small plant in the land had yet sprung up; everything is ready but it hasn't quite happened yet. What is it waiting for? ...The arrival of the man and the woman. The arrival of the one who is going to have the responsibility for the stewardship and dominion of this creation. The one who is going to *till* the ground and the one who is going to receive the gifts... In other words, what we have right here in Genesis chapter 2 in verses 4 and following, is a clear indication that humanity is not only not an accident, not only not an imposition on the planet, the planet was made for human habitation. And the planet itself and even the rest of creation is waiting for the arrival of the human being in order for it to flourish" [Albert Mohler. (2013, August 5). *8. Genesis 2:4-25*. Albertmohler.com. <https://albertmohler.com/sermon-series/genesis, 7:00-8:08>].

[It is] in the very order of things [that believers ought] diligently to contemplate God's fatherly love toward mankind, in that He did not create Adam until He had lavished upon the universe all manner of good things ... Now when He disposed the movements of the sun and stars to human uses, filled the earth, waters, and air with living things, and brought forth an abundance of fruits to suffice as foods, in thus assuming the responsibility of a foreseeing and diligent father of the family *He shows His wonderful goodness towards us.*<sup>15</sup>

In the next post, Albert Mohler's understanding of God's glory in the cross and redemption will be explored.

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<sup>15</sup> John Calvin (1960). *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volume One* (John T. McNeill, Ed.). Westminster John Know Press. Louisville KY. p. 161-162. Emphasis mine.