

God's Artistry Is Displayed on the Canvas of the Universe and in Nature Itself

Just how do the testimony of nature and what we read in the Bible fit together? Francis Schaeffer offers an illustration that brilliantly answers this question.¹ Here's a summary of his analogy.

Suppose we are walking through a forest, and we come upon a two-story cabin. We begin to explore the inside of the cabin, and on the first floor we find a table. On the table we discover the bottom portion of a book that has been ripped in two, leaving about one inch of type on each page. We can read what is printed on the bottom of these pages, but we cannot decipher the entire story, the complete message of the book's author. Of course, no one among us ever would suggest that what we see before us has come into being by chance. An intelligent being is the clear source of the section of the book we are examining with great curiosity.

As we continue exploring, we go upstairs and find the top portion of the same book. We now can bring the two sections of the book together and at last can read the entire message of the author. We can understand the complete story he sought to convey when he wrote. Moreover, through the book, we can get to know the author. This is especially true because in the book, the author tells us about himself.

The bottom portion of the book—the section we discovered on the first floor—represents

nature, the world around us, the cosmos, and the created order. The top section represents the Scriptures; in them nature is explained. Further, as we read the top and bottom pages together, the bottom pages make much more sense; nature's testimony aligns with what the Scriptures tell us.

There's more! It should not surprise us that what the bottom pages tell us coincides with all we learn from reading the top part of the book. We now understand not just "what," but "why." Our questions about life and nature are answered in the Bible—not exhaustively, but adequately. We learn why evil exists in the world. We can understand how nature reflects God's perfect character, even though the world, the people in the world, and even the universe itself have been marred and damaged by sin and evil. Furthermore, in reading of God's solution to the mess we're in, we discover that we can respond to Him in a personal way because He has revealed Himself personally to us. God didn't just unveil Himself in nature and in the Bible; He also came and lived among us personally in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

¹Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who is There: 30th Anniversary Edition* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press 1998, 1982, 1968), 137-138.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. We've acknowledged that though incomplete, the bottom portion of the ripped book we discovered in the first floor of the cabin never could have come into being by chance. Why is this the case? What does this imply about those who say God doesn't exist?
2. Artists typically sign their drawings and paintings in the lower right-hand corner of their works. God signed His name and revealed truth about who He is in the top portion of the ripped book — the Scriptures. Even so, we might say that "His fingerprints are all over nature and the world around us." Because they are, we can learn important truths about Him just by observing nature. What can you learn about God by observing nature and the world around you?
3. Describe some of the ways that nature and the observable universe (the bottom portion of the ripped book) and the Scriptures (the top portion of the ripped book) offer a unified message.