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The Heavens (and the Hubble) Are Telling the Glory of God

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The images now flowing from the [Hubble Space Telescope](#) are simply stunning. Vast nebulae appear as delicate butterflies and the vast reaches of the universe are coming into new focus. All this comes after a feat of modern engineering and expertise as a rescue mission to the telescope last spring replaced two cameras and repaired broken equipment. The rescue mission cost approximately \$1 billion, but the life of the orbiting telescope was extended at least five years.



No one envisioned this kind of longevity for Hubble when the telescope was first put into orbit in 1990. Named for astronomer Edwin P. Hubble (1889-1953), the telescope's location in orbit around the earth avoids the distortions of the earth's atmosphere.

Now, with images streaming from the Hubble, scientists are elated and NASA is relieved. "The hair was standing up on the back of my neck to see the potential of this telescope," said John Grunsfeld, one of the astronauts who fixed the telescope back in the spring. Heidi Hammel of the Space Science Institute said, "We're giddy with the quality of the data we're getting." Astronaut Mike Massimino simply said, "Thank God, we didn't break it."

It is easy to see why. The images are simply amazing, even to a non-astronomer. These visions have never been seen by human eyes before. In these and so many other ways, this generation has glimpsed the grandeur of the creation like no generation before us.

One interesting facet of the publicity around the new images from Hubble is the inadequacy of the comments offered by so many. Consider this portion of an account by the [Associated Press](#):

The butterfly photo shows details, such as gassy folds in what looks like butterfly wings, that the Hubble previously could not see, said Hubble senior scientist Dave Leckrone.

The glow in that photo and others is hot gas and dust pushed out from the stars, Leckrone said. In a way, it's like a lightbulb, with the star as the filament but the overall glow from the gas, he said.

The images, especially the butterfly, don't just show science, but can evoke a sense of spirituality, Leckrone said.

"What I see is the grandeur of creation, however it got there," Leckrone told The Associated Press.

The Associated Press offers a very credible news story on the Hubble excitement. But consider the statement provided by Dave Leckrone: "What I see is the grandeur of creation, however it got there." As the report indicates, Leckrone

suggested that the Hubble images should evoke “spirituality,” and not merely a respect for science.

Leckrone may well be speaking honestly about his lack of concern for “how it got there,” but I doubt that is all there is to it. How can intelligent people consider the grandeur of the cosmos without pondering, “how it got there?” In the end, the “how” question (or the “who” question) determines the meaning of the cosmos itself. If the universe (and what lies beyond) is merely an accident of physics, the grandeur is simply in the sheer unlikeliness of it all. Beyond this observation, little more can be said. We are left to ponder the cosmos as a freakish accident that provides human beings (also accidents) with an opportunity for amazement.

If, on the other hand, the cosmos is the work of a sovereign and holy Creator, the cosmos is itself a reflection of His character and power — and the theater of His glory.

According to *The New York Times*, astronaut K. Megan McArthur reacted to the images coming from the newly-repaired Hubble with this: “I’m in awe of the human ingenuity that could conceive of such a thing and then make it happen.” Well, the human ingenuity displayed in the Hubble is indeed impressive — deeply so. But how do we explain even the wonder of this human ingenuity? Furthermore, how can one’s wonder stop at human ingenuity? The real wonder is not Hubble, but what Hubble has allowed us at last to see.

“The heavens are telling the glory of God,” sings the Psalmist, “and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” [Psalm 19:1, NASB] Every atom of creation cries out the glory of God. The Hubble Space Telescope now shows the glory of God in the universe in a new dimension — and in breathtaking color and complexity. To see these images is to view the work of the Creator in a glory newly disclosed, newly visible to human eyes.

To read of the vast distances and dimensions seen and measured by Hubble’s technology is to be reminded just how small our planet really is — and how even smaller we humans are. As the Psalmist reflected: “When I consider your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?” [Psalm 8:3-4, NASB]

The cosmos does reveal the glory of the Creator — indeed it is inevitably so. The heavens — and Hubble — are telling the glory of God. He who has eyes to see, let him see.

Photo credit, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). Main Hubble page with images available [here](#).

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