

# OpenTheo

## **Everyday Glory: The Revelation of God in All of Reality (Gerald McDermott)**

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### **Alastair Roberts**

Gerald McDermott joins me to discuss his book, 'Everyday Glory: The Revelation of God in All of Reality': <https://amzn.to/2UBxS9z>.

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## **Transcript**

Hello and welcome to another episode. Today I'm joined by my friend, Gerald McDermott, recently retired from Beeson Divinity School, and the author of this book, *Everyday Glory, The Revelation of God in All of Reality*. Please join me to discuss this book, and thank you very much for coming on the podcast.

You're welcome. It's always a pleasure to talk with you, Alastair. So your book is titled *Everyday Glory, Revelation of God in All Reality*, and within it, you encourage and illustrate a way of understanding and appreciating natural revelation.

So what first inspired you to write the book, and why is that sort of attention to reality so important? Well, many years ago, I happened upon a notebook that Jonathan Edwards had kept throughout his life. Jonathan Edwards is probably the best theologian that North America has ever produced, and it's not just I who say this. There's a broad consensus on that.

And he titled the notebook, Types or Images of Divine Things. And in this notebook, now about 85 pages in print in the Yale University Press edition of the works of Edwards, he jotted notes on the resemblances to the triune God and his ways that he saw in all the world around him. And by world, he meant not only nature, but also what we would call human relations.

And I was immediately struck and enthralled. It opened this notebook, really a new world to me. I began to see beauty and riches in the stars above and the world beneath, as Kant famously said, and pointers to gospel truths in multiple dimensions of reality.

And then when I began to explore the history of Christian thought, I discovered that this Jonathan Edwards' way of seeing the world was not uncommon at all in previous Christian theology. In fact, it was the norm. But in the 20th century, this way of seeing was lost in many sectors of the Christian church for reasons I'm sure we'll get into.

The reasons are now understandable, but the effect was a terrible loss to the faith of millions. And so I wrote the book in an attempt to retrieve this profoundly Christian way of seeing the world. You used the term typology many times within the book.

How would you define that term? What is a type? Well, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, 16, all the things that happened to Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness were tupoi. That's the Greek word from which we get type. And the singular is tupon or tupos, which generally means signs.

And Paul says what happened to Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness in 1 Corinthians 10, 6, were signs to teach us about Christ. Signs and symbols in the book of Scripture pointing to the Messiah and his redemption. Jesus said, Moses wrote about me.

And to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he said that there are things about me in all the Scriptures. Of course, he meant all of the Old Testament. So historic Christianity has talked about the two books in which God reveals himself, the book of Scripture and the book of nature.

And the idea of types, the historic Christian idea of types is twofold. A number one, types are signs or symbols of Christ's redemption that are all throughout the Old Testament pointing toward the New Testament realities. And then also signs or symbols that God has planted in all the worlds out there of nature.

And also this little world called the human being, this part of nature, signs and symbols in these two worlds of nature, pointing to the triune God and his work of redemption. Is there a difference in the way that you define biblical typology and natural typology? So for instance, what are some of the ways in which Scripture teaches us to see a sort of typology in nature? What would be some examples of this perhaps? Right, well, biblical typology in short teaches us how to interpret natural typology or the types in nature. And

we see the Bible saying this.

So Job says, ask the beasts and the birds of the heavens and they will teach you. Jesus says, look at the lilies of the field and the ravens of the air. They teach us that God will clothe us and feed us and we don't have to worry.

They teach that God cares about us. If God cares about the lilies and God cares about the birds of the air, surely Jesus said that he cares much more about you. And if we don't look at nature, Jesus suggests, we might look at the sky.

And particularly now that we know how there are billions of galaxies, not just stars, and realize how proportionately little, tiny and insignificant and finally lacking in importance we as individual human beings are. And we might conclude that God doesn't care about little me. So we need the book of Scripture to interpret for us.

The types that are in the book of nature. So, Paul says also, we talked about Job and Jesus, but Paul says also, very interestingly, in 1 Corinthians 15, he seems to be exasperated by the Corinthians because they don't get the types in nature. He says, you foolish person, don't you see, or don't you know, or don't you realize that what you sow, a seed in the ground, does not come to life again unless it dies first.

And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. Now, Paul's saying, look, nature's been teaching us all along that out of death comes new life that is different from his first form. He was saying this because the Corinthians were doubting the resurrection of the body.

And how does Paul teach them the resurrection of the body? He goes to nature first. It seems to me that this actually is part of a biblical account of typology. If you do not have some undergirding natural typology, then your understanding of scriptural typology is necessarily limited.

It becomes more of just a literary device or something like that without some deep foundation to it. But if we believe that God is providentially overseeing history, that he is the one who's orchestrated nature, then the biblical typology has something rooted, it's rooted upon. And the way you treat typology, it seems to suggest that the aesthetic realm is a realm of meaning.

How can beauty and meaning be related? Well, here I go to Jonathan Edwards, who is one of the great typologists in the history of Christian thought. And Edwards said, beauty is the ultimate type. Beauty, in fact, he says, is the inner secret to all of nature and thus the types in nature.

Deep within the structure of nature, he taught, is beauty, which points us to the divine beauty of the Trinity. Now, let me unpack that a little bit. Beauty for Edwards is proportion or consent.

Now, he distinguished between simple and complex beauty. So for example, simple beauty would be the proportion or agreement between two apples. Complex beauty would be the complex agreement harmony and proportion in say, a beautiful human face.

Complex harmony, he said, and thus beauty. We see in things where parts are very different and even jarring. So take music, a jazz chord that sounds dissonant when played by itself, but sounds beautiful when fitting within a progression of chorus.

Or the asymmetric harmony that you see in a Japanese garden, as opposed to the symmetries of a French garden. So in all of nature, Edwards said, there are things that seem in disharmony when viewed up close, but beautiful when seen from afar, which points to the ultimate beauty of the Trinity. So all the beauties down here, so to speak, in nature point to the ultimate beauty of the Trinity, where you have three different persons, now talking about difference, consenting to a plan that involves evil and ugliness for the purpose of saving a fallen world.

So talking about difference and disharmony, pointing to a final harmony and a final beauty. So immediate discordances leading to ultimate concordance and harmony, consent of different beings and different persons giving in self and sacrificial way for the good of all. So Edwards says, in one word, beauty is love.

All beauty down here points to the harmony of love, which comes ultimately from the harmony of the three persons in the Trinity, cooperating and giving of each person to the whole of the Trinitarian God. You know, scientists speak of the beauty that is in all of nature, from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic. So Frank Wilczek at Harvard, the great physicist who writes a column, by the way, regularly in the Wall Street Journal, and he's not a traditional believer, but nevertheless, he talks about the beauty of nature's deep design, saying that it's as strange as its strangeness is beautiful.

And he also has used the phrase, somehow this cosmos comes from a creator of stunning artistry. So even scientists recognize that there's beauty in nature and Edwards would say, and the great Christian tradition would say, the beauty in nature points to the beauty of the Trinitarian God, and that's where the beauty in nature comes from. It seems that this is something that's been taken up in hymnody as well.

I think of the lines, heaven above is softer blue, earth below is sweeter green, something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen. That in the light of Christ, things take on a beauty that is very clearly his beauty in things that people recognize as they turn to Christ, that his reflection is in the wider reality. I'd be interested to hear some of your thoughts on the dangers and the problems with some sort of careless or irresponsible typology.

It seems that this way of looking at the world, many people are cautious and want to

step back precisely because they don't see where are the controls? Where are the limits? Are there any controls? Yes, well, there are controls and it has to be controls because of what people typically have pointed to as originist typology, going back to the church father named Origen, who in some ways went beyond traditional controls and many of his followers have done so too. What do I mean by this? Well, what's been called originist typology reads our own lessons and our own patterns into nature in ways that ignore the story of scripture. And also as James Jordan once pointed out, James Jordan is a master of typology.

The problem with originist typology is that the primary problem is that it reads Platonist meaning into so-called lessons from nature. And by Platonist, what he means there is the platonic tendency to say that history is not important. Matter is either not important or actually evil.

And matter is finally not real. Only the world of the spirit is real. So those kinds of lessons, James Jordan rightly points out to my mind is the problem with some typology that can be rightly called originist.

So it's a flee from history, which is the proper domain of typology to allegorical generalizations about human existence. Now, what are the controls? Well, basically the Orthodox story of redemption from scripture and from the great tradition. The rules you might say are threefold.

First, that things or events must fall within a clear range of biblical meaning. Second, when something in nature or history does not have a clear biblical counterpart, it must nevertheless fall within the meaning of the whole story of redemption that the Bible tells. Now, another way of saying this is the true typology as opposed to bad typology or false typology is descending rather than ascending.

And what I mean by that is that good typology rooted in scripture and the great tradition is not a priori starting with preconceived ideas and then using them to construct a natural theology, but rather it's a posteriori, which means it comes later. It thinks after God's thoughts, after reflecting on God's prior revelation as it's been given to us in scripture and the teaching of the Orthodox Church. And then the third control is that we should compare and measure all of our supposed types against the wisdom of the great tradition of theology and exegesis and hermeneutics.

So you're saying in some ways that this way of seeing the world is almost confirming recognition based upon Christian faith that when we come to the world with an understanding based from scripture, that we see a confirming recognition that helps to support that in the world. Yes, yes, well put. How can we see God and his glory in the mirror of creation without reducing God to the level of nature? And so for instance, people have often talked about the importance of apophatic theology and some of its limits that it places upon conceiving of God within a natural framework.

Is typology a denial of that? How does the very strongly cataphatic impulse of the typology that you described fit with the emphases of apophatic theology? Right, this is the apophatic fear of reducing God to natural terms, to the level of nature as you put it, that we won't recognize God's transcendence and his dissimilarity amidst the similarities that we come up with in our typologies. Well, you know, I think Peter Lighthouse has made an astute observation about these apophatic criticisms of much of typology. And he points out that the biblical writers did not have this anxiety that 20th and 21st century theologians are full of when they confront typology and typological theory.

You know, the biblical authors compared God flat out to rocks and fire and fathers and shepherds. They used very ordinary language to talk about the God from whom language comes. In fact, by their uses of imagery from nature, they testify that God himself had used nature and that part of nature called human nature and human being to talk about himself.

God inspired the biblical authors to call him a rock, to call him fire and compare his son to a lamb and to a lion. So Edwards insisted that he was not merely inventing correspondences as originists would. He rejected excessive typology and you could say to a certain point, he accepted the criticism of the apophaticists when he pointed to certain typologists who went beyond the bounds of biblical teaching and inference.

But nevertheless, once again, we get back to the authors of scripture who don't have this reticence about comparing God to many, many things in nature. That seems even the images that we have in scripture of transcendence itself are ones that are catabatic. You can think about God in terms of the analogy of the son and the son's relationship to us or the way that God can be compared to a father.

And these are human images that are given great force. A lot of weight is placed upon them in scripture, but clearly they're limited. They'll only take us so far, but they do take us somewhere in a way that if we purely relied upon the apophatic theology, the danger is you can always project anything onto an apophatic blank that you've created.

Whereas this sort of language gives us some degree of a purchase even upon notions such as transcendence without emptying the actual force of that transcendence in a way that will collapse God into imminence. Jonathan Edwards is a very prominent exemplar of natural typology in your argument in this book. Can you say more about Edwards' treatment of an understanding of nature? And also maybe some of the other theologians that you believe most exemplify the Christian tradition of treating nature in this particular way.

Sure, well, I'll start with the last part. The other theologians, just two examples whom I mentioned in book Ephraim of Syria, not well known, but important in the early church. He famously wrote that Christ created everything and traced his symbols on all of his property throughout the creation.

Gregory of Nyssa, one of the great Cappadocian theologians, said every part of nature speaks. All of nature is full of types. There's meaning everywhere, but the meaning has to be discovered by eyes that see and ears that hear that have been opened by the Holy Spirit.

So Edwards was also a great typologist following in this typological tradition of Orthodox natural theology. And let me just give you an example. He talked about the sun in the sky, S-U-N, and talked about what the sun shows us about not just the God of creation as Calvin would distinguish, but also the God of redemption as Calvin distinguished.

So what does the sun show us about the God of redemption? Well, Jonathan Edwards said, the sun never diminishes in light or heat throughout the ages, which shows us the all sufficiency, now here are Edwards' words, and everlastingness of God's bounty and goodness. Also, the sun shows us by our looking at how nature is dependent on the sun. He referred to vegetables that grow and flourish, looking green and pleasant only because they've had an abundance of sunlight.

This shows us our need for the Holy Spirit's, what he called effusions, pouring out, for us to be spiritually healthy, just as plants need the sun to be physically healthy. But Edwards also observed the sun is not perfect. If you view it with 18th century telescopes, which he did, you see that the sun has spots.

You know, back in the 18th century, they knew about sunspots. And the sunspots show us that even the most excellent created beings have imperfections. So, now he also spoke more fully elsewhere about the sun, but I'll stop there.

At what level would you say that a natural type means? Are we talking about natural realities having a fixed and a single meaning, referring to some higher reality? So, this means that sort of approach. Or is natural theology a sort of science with very clear and sure and determinative and demands results that we can demonstrate? Or is it more of an art with many possible ways of approaching it? So, I wonder, reading your book, is your claim more that the world is a rich realm of analogies and that a lively apprehension of the world in its variegated beauty makes us apt for fuller understanding of ourselves and God's truth? Which would be that analogies are grounded in real divinely established affinities between different levels of reality and different realities. And that a good creative expression of connections between realities will necessarily be attentive, responsive, and non-arbitrary.

That it will have a freedom to draw many different connections. Yeah, I'd say historic Christian typology is an art rather than a science. It's an art that must be learned, just as medicine is an art of seeing how the body and healing work.

That must be learned. And aesthetics is an art of appreciating beauty that must be learned. But it's not arbitrary.

Beauty is not simply in the eye of the beholder. Even if it is a reality that can be easily missed by those whose eyes have not been opened and who have not been trained in this art of seeing the divine glory throughout all creation. But they're more than simply analogies that we happen to notice.

It's historic Christian typology goes further to say that the type actually participates in the anti-type. Now, for those of you, of your watchers and listeners who aren't familiar with typology, as Dr. Roberts, as you, Alistair, are a master of the typological tradition, and you're in an excellent book on typology, the anti-type is the truth or the person or the thing in redemption that the type points to. So the type points to the anti-type.

And I would argue, and Edward's argued it, and others more recently, such as Edward Pusey, the great Anglican 19th century theologian, that the type actually participates in the anti-type. Ontologically, that means at the level of being, that the type shares in the being of that to which it refers. Now, Paul suggests this in that famous 1 Corinthians 10 passage, where he talks about the rock that was following the Israelites in the wilderness from which they drank water miraculously.

He said the rock wasn't just a symbol of Christ. He said the rock was Christ. Now, that's the first clue we get.

A second clue is the story of the tabernacle that of course is detailed in Exodus and picked up extensively in the book of Hebrews. We're told in Exodus that the glory that God sent down upon the tabernacle in the wilderness was so dazzling that Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the clouds settled on it. The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.

Now, Hebrews tells us the tabernacle was only a type of the heavenly realities. So the glory of the tabernacle must have been to some degree lesser, less, less, forgive my bad grammar, less than the glory of the heavenly tabernacle that both Exodus and Hebrews also speak of. So there are levels or degrees of glory.

As Hebrew says, the things of the law, such as the tabernacle were shadows of their heavenly counterpart. So it's plausible that the glory of the tabernacle was also a shadow of the fullness of heavenly glory. So types participate in the anti-type to different degrees.

Pusey called the anti-type that is Christ in his kingdom, the grand archetype is the only archetype in all of reality. And all the types Pusey said, draw their being and their substance from the grand archetype. But here's the catch.

The types contain the substance to different degrees. So bread and wine in the Eucharist are so full of the substance that the types of bread and wine somehow mysteriously, the historic Christian sacramental tradition tells us, become the archetype of Christ in his



body and blood. Other types like the sun in the sky that I was just talking about that Edwards discussed at length, do not participate to such a degree in the archetype, but nevertheless, they draw their substance.

The sun, S-U-N, draws its substance from the sun, S-O-N. So just one final word on that. The tabernacle therefore in the wilderness participated in the glory of God.

But according to the New Testament, not to the degree to which a body of Christian worshipers among whom Christ is more fully known partakes of that glory. It seems then that this is something that can inform a theology of typology as relates very specifically to biblical typology as well. That's what you're saying is that there is deep foundation to typology as such.

And as a result, when we're dealing with biblical typology, it cannot be reduced to the level of the literary. And there are literary types, but those literary types are an exploration of the lineaments of actual reality itself. That reality is something, it's a realm of participation.

And as such, what we see in the literary form of the text corresponds with the actual character of reality itself. Yes, yes, precisely. So typology is not only literary as you put it, but historic Christian biblical typology is also ontological.

Can you give some examples? We've been talking about this more in principle, but can you give some more examples of typology in nature or in various realities? Much of your book is given to exploring very specific realms and typology as it can function within those. You've mentioned the sun. Can you maybe discuss some others? Well, my chapters include a chapter on sex.

And sex is something with which this world is obsessed, the current world. Paul suggests that the marital act, the sexual marital act in some mysterious way, according to Ephesians five, points to the union of Christ and his church. Things that are very, very different, man and woman and their bodies, but obviously biologically are made for each other and made to produce fruit.

A child that comes out of an act of love, which points to the Trinitarian difference of three persons giving themselves to each other with ultimate commitment as in marriage, producing fruit. And the creation. So, just a few things in that chapter on sex, I'll say and then I'll stop.

And of course, sex is part of nature. Human beings generally participate in the sexual act, not just Christians and Jews. Have you noticed these things, I ask in that chapter, that other mammals also reproduce by sexual coupling? But only the human animals look each other in the eyes when they have sex.

Only human beings joke and laugh during their what's called properly lovemaking. Only

human beings feel shame when they learn they've been seen in the act. Then there's the physicality of human sex, which by itself cries out for interpretation.

Why must a woman open her legs as if to welcome? The welcome involves trust, for she's made herself vulnerable to a man who is usually far stronger. Why does the man take off his clothes, opening himself to possible ridicule if he doesn't trust the woman to welcome him? He exposes his most sensitive organ, which he knows the woman can harm him if she chooses to. So he too must trust.

The two can avoid each other's eyes, but only by dodging what is more natural. This is the behavior of persons whose souls speak through their eyes. It's plain to those with eyes to see that these are not merely bodies exchanging pleasure, but that this is an action meant to exchange love.

If there are no words of affection, one will often object. Their physical oneness calls out for tenderness, but why should it if this is merely a physical release or an emotional release? Just imagine a visitor from Mars. After a while on the green planet, watching movies and studying the anatomy textbooks, this Martian observer notices that the male and female sexual organs fit together.

Then he also notices that when a man and woman come together in this way, a new degree of love is often expressed and created. And children often as a result come into being. He would conclude from the way these strange human bodies are made and work, they must have been designed for love and fruitfulness.

This is part of what's John Paul II calls the language of the body, and one more way in which nature, and particularly human nature, is full of types. So it seems it's a good example of the way in which the human body and the human self are connected together as in, I mean, you cannot separate those two things, but in other ways, they occur at different levels of reality. If it's merely viewed as a physical act, sex isn't what it truly is for human beings.

Sex is a personal act, but yet that bodily character of the act is integral to it. And also we can think about things like the human face, that the human face is, we encounter the person in the face, but yet the human face is not the person in itself. If someone's face is horribly disfigured by war or some other accident, we don't believe that they've ceased to be a person, but yet we do encounter the human person in the face.

There is that natural typology, but it suggests something maybe of just how thick the concept of typology is, that we're dealing with this realm of deeply entwined and entangled participation. You can't disentangle these things. They belong together in this profound unity.

Yes, I agree. So reading your book, I was reminded at various points, and we've just

talked about human lovemaking, the song of songs and the way that it conscripts the entire natural world as a sort of artistic medium through which to describe the reality of love, and then to explore the meaningful typological interrelation between human and then divine love. And it seems to me that one of the consequences of your book's argument is that poetry is a very primary means of knowing the world and reality.

Would that be a fair reading? Yeah, I think so. And I mentioned the Anglican theologian in the 19th century, Pusey. Pusey talks about this.

He said, the problem with us moderns is we want to insist on precision and clarity. Even in this profound realm of the knowledge of God. But if we do insist on precision and clarity, a certain kind of clarity, an enlightenment-like intellectualistic clarity, we will never understand poetry, he said.

And so when we want to replace the poetic figures of scripture, the poetic types of scripture with abstract propositions more suited to certain kinds of the enlightenment, and there were many enlightenments, actually, we will evaporate much of the meaning of the Bible. The Bible, he said, is a beautiful story full of poetic types and symbols and images, evocative of poetry and art. The Bible appeals as much to the right brain as to the left brain.

And rather than this being a drawback of the Bible, it's actually part of its glory and beauty. Like all beautiful things, it often shows us rather than telling us its inner secrets. It's full of, as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 2, spiritual things for those who are spiritual.

For us to insist on clear instructions in intellectualistic manner that explicate all of the poetic symbols is sort of like asking Mozart to write a philosophical analysis of his music. It seems to me also that there is a form of precision that comes with poetry that is not that of knocking things down to a single meaning. It's almost multiplying meanings, but multiplying meanings in very careful and precise ways and exploring something of the connection between things rather than the distinction of things from other things that helps us to understand what they truly are in a way that would not be possible if we're constantly separating everything.

And to detach categories. Maybe take the example of the Old Testament sacrificial system. How would that be an illustration maybe of the approach to nature that you describe in your book? Right.

Some recent scholars have argued, I think rightly, that the ancient Hebrews learned God not by reading, not even so much by listening to sermons at the synagogues or the temple, but by doing, by participating in liturgy, which is full of poetic images. And first and foremost, you could say it was the sacrificial system. Of dealing with sin and impurity, multiple kinds of impurity, and that's what the sacrificial system was all about.

They learned by participating in them and watching them, watching the poetry of the sacrifices. They learned by doing, by participating, that life that contains blood has to be sacrificed to atone for sin because sin causes death, takes away life. So a new life must be given back to God in sacrifice.

And watching these for centuries and participating in these sacrifices for centuries prepared the Israelite people to eventually see and understand the blood sacrifice of the perfect Israelite for the sins of all of Israel and all of the world. But Israel had to learn in stages. They couldn't just see this all at once, just as any human being has to learn in stages throughout life, from being the smallest child to the oldest adult.

And so the Old Testament sacrificial system is a perfect illustration of the right brain, participatory way that God teaches us about himself. I find it fascinating just thinking about the degree to which sacrifice is found around the world. This isn't just something that Israel came up with in an arbitrary way.

It's something, whether through the influence of Noah and others and knowledge that passed on through them or whether it's through just a natural human apprehension of reality and the significance of certain realities and their aptness for certain purposes. This seems to be a more general practice. The other thing is the way in which Israel's history and story is mapped on the agricultural calendar.

So seasons become means by which you understand the events of redemptive history. And then animals have a particular purpose. It matters whether it's a male or a female, whether it's a bull or a ram or whether it's a turtle dove.

It matters where the blood goes. It matters what part of the altar that the blood is placed upon. Is it placed on the horns of the altar? Is it cast against the side? Is it poured at the base or is it somewhere else? And it seems you have a vast and subtle system of meaning that maps the entirety of Israel's life onto reality in a way that they play out that theological significance within the realm of the natural world, seeing themselves within these animals and recognizing as they place their hand on the animal, for instance, it's not just a picture.

It's something you'll participate. It's a drama being played out. And you're involved in this very deep existential way.

In the same way as you might think of a wedding ring, I think maybe it's just a picture of a relationship, but it's far more than just a picture. It's a symbolic manifestation, the exchange of which is something by which the actual relationship is constituted. And whether it's the way that it represents the continuity and the fact that that relationship will not end or whether it represents the beauty of the person to whom the ring is given and the precious nature that they have to the person who's given them the ring.

These symbols, even within our modern world, which has been so strict of the force of symbolism, still retain some force that maybe can help us recover a sense of that world. And it seems to me much of our modern understanding of nature and its beauty seems to place us in the position of spectators, but the biblical vision seems to be far more embedded and use the word participatory. What accounts for the difference between this older way of viewing and experiencing the world and our more modern one? And are there ways in which we could recover a fuller embeddedness in creation? Well, I think the difference is that we have been propagandized, we've been indoctrinated by the three modern prophets, Freud, Marx, and Darwin.

And they have convinced moderns, both subliminally and explicitly, that the world is not the beautiful mystery that the great tradition has always said it was, created by a glorious God and thus full of his glory, but rather is simply the new arena for the survival of the fittest, that's Darwin, of course, or it's the arena for the exploitation of the proletariat, that's Marx, of course, or it's the realm in which we play out the conflict between the superego and the id, that's Freud. So we've all been affected by these, whether we know it or not, and it tends to blind us to the glory that's all around us in all the worlds in which we participate. So how do we recover this ancient and historical vision? I think by reading books like *Everyday Glory*.

I'm sorry. But we need to recover it for spiritual health and emotional health, and to once again experience the joy that the ancients and historic Orthodox Christians partook of, even in the midst of lives of great suffering, to be able to know the joy of the Lord in the midst of suffering, which the Bible promises, to be able to see the beauty of the Lord in all the world around us, even as that world is full of evil and deception. We need to be able to see the world, not as 20th century Christians have tended to see it, you know, the world of nature as fundamentally removed from the realm of grace, but rather as a world of nature filled with supernatural signs, put there by the transcendent and incarnational God, and thus a world studded with sparkling lights, light that not only sparkles, but also talks.

So, you know, a world where we not only see natural beauty, but see the divine beauty that the natural beauty is pointing to. And we recognize that we are filled with glory because we are made in the image of God. And all the world inside of us, and the world outside of us, cries out with the glory of God.

Even the stones are crying out, if we would listen as Jesus said to his critics. And this seems to fit very well into more general Christian practice of liturgy and sacraments as a realm in which it's a training ground for seeing the world in this way. Yes, you know, Thomas Aquinas, I think was very good on that.

He talked about the sacraments as types that are enacted. So the enacted types that enact the gospel. That play out the drama of the gospel, not only showing the gospel, as

Protestants are wont to say, but also doing the gospel and drawing us into the gospel at the level of being and not just intellectual showing.

So infant baptism is a perfect illustration and enactment of God's grace, where God plants seeds of the Holy Spirit into this little infant who has done nothing to merit or deserve or even ask for it. What a picture of grace. And you know, the Eucharist to show and to enact that Jesus is not only our teacher, but he himself is heavenly manna.

And faith is not only symbolically a kind of eating, but faith involves actually eating in some mysterious way, the body and blood of the son of God. It shows Jesus as heavenly manna, but it also performed. But Jesus actually feeds us with himself and his body and blood is heavenly manna.

So it's a type. So the sacraments are types that not only show the gospel, but accomplish the gospel. Do the gospel in our midst and in us.

Your book is very much about a transforming vision, encouraging people and training people to open their eyes to look at the natural world in a new way. Do you have any thoughts on how the opening of our eyes to see the world in this way, to see God's glory in the natural cosmos can be related to a theology of the beatific vision? Yeah, Hans Borseman has written a good recent book on the beatific vision, seeing God. And he compares Jonathan Edwards to Thomas Aquinas in that book very helpfully.

And both Edwards and Aquinas are all about seeing God in the beatific vision. But the difference between, one of the differences between Edwards and Aquinas is that while Thomas Aquinas said that the beatific vision does not start until heaven after this life, Jonathan Edwards says, the beatific vision starts here in the life of the Christian. And of course, in both cases, it's only by grace.

It's only by God opening our eyes to his beauties. But for Thomas, therefore, there's a disconnect, a fundamental disconnect in Christian experience between this life and the next. But for Edwards, there's a fundamental continuum, a fundamental connection between this life and the next.

Both of them say that the primary organ of the Christian life, you could say, is the eye. In contrary fashion, or you might say complimentary fashion to Luther, who said the primary Christian organ is the ear. The primary Christian experience is hearing the word of God.

Thomas and Edwards both wanna say, no, hearing the word of God is, of course, fundamental. But nevertheless, the primary Christian experience is seeing God in all of his beauty and glory. So Edwards and Thomas agree on that, that the beatific vision is the goal of the Christian life.

But Edwards says it can start in partial fashion, even here and now. That seems that

scripture has a far richer account of the faculty of sight or that process of perception that we do. So for instance, the imagery of the lamp, the eye is the lamp of the body.

Now, we don't think about the eye as a light, as something that is an active organ that gives light to the body, nor do we think of the eye as receptive in the way that scripture speaks of it. So we think, okay, it takes light coming in, but it's not something that transforms the person who is seeing. Whereas within scripture, we have verses like, when we see him, we'll be like him, for we'll see him as he is.

But we do see something of that, I think, in our perception of beauty. When someone witnesses a beautiful piece of musical performance, you can see that they are transformed, they're opened up by it. It's like the face of a flower to the sun.

It unfurls because there's something about the beauty of reality that elicits a beauty in us and an openness in us. And so that opening up of the self to the world and the reflection of God's glory within it is something that anticipates that greater opening up of the flower of human nature in the face of God's divine glory revealed and the great beatific vision. Yes, earthly eyes that need grace to be open to see the heavenly beauty.

So your book is, *Everyday Glory, The Revelation of God in All of Reality*. Thank you so much for coming on. If people want to get a copy of this, they should be able to find it anywhere good books are sold.

That correct? That's correct, especially at Amazon. Thank you, Alistair, for having me on. Thank you so much for joining me.

You're welcome.