

Marvellous Creator

Eagles generally lay two eggs per year although some eagles have been known to lay up to four eggs in one year over a period of four days. Immediately after the first egg is laid, the mother eagle begins to incubate it. When she lays her second egg a day later, she also incubates that one and when the eaglets hatch, they come out of their shells a day apart. It is quite often the case that when it is obvious that the first eaglet will survive, the second eaglet receives only the leftovers. If there is not enough food, the second eaglet will probably die.

Chickens are very different. A hen will lay as many as a dozen eggs, one per day, but she will not incubate them right away. Rather, she waits to incubate the eggs until the last one has laid, and then she sits on all of them. Surprisingly, although the eggs were laid over a period of almost two weeks, they all hatch on the same day, and the same is true of ducks and geese. Although I have seen a hen with a dozen chicks, all the same age, it never occurred to me that though their eggs were laid on different days, they all hatched on the same day.

We could divide birds into two categories: predators and prey. Although it is not always true, predatory birds such as eagles and hawks and owls lay fewer eggs and their young hatch on different days. Birds, such as chickens and ducks, which tend to be prey (and also tend to be domesticated), have more offspring and their offspring hatch on the same day.

Although I didn't think about this until I was in my late 40s, I was startled by how creation works. To this day, I am filled with wonder because of this phenomenon as simple as it is. Truly we have a wonderful Creator. I would never have thought to make predatory birds and their prey to be so different. It is truly marvellous, when we think about it.

When we look at creation, we do see the wonders of God, as the Belgic Confession teaches us. Creation is the first book of God's revelation of himself, for in creation we can see the mind and heart of our Creator. The Bible, of course, is the second book of God's self-revelation and focuses our attention on how God saves his creation, something that we cannot learn from creation itself. Yet, creation should always move us to marvel about God's intricate wisdom.

Over the past few centuries, we have learned to understand creation more than anyone else who has ever lived. Many scientists who do not believe in God's existence want us to believe that one day we will have all of creation completely figured out and when we do, we can become self sufficient. Now there is nothing wrong with wanting to understand creation, for God has built into us a curiosity that moves us to discover and learn, but when we believe that understanding creation will eliminate the need for us to believe in God, we are wrong. Some fear that learning too much will result in us feeling that we do not need God.

Christians, in a sense, have created a bit of a problem for themselves. Over the centuries, if something was unexplained, what was unknown was attributed to God. If there were gaps in our knowledge, the explanation was that it was God's work. God became a God-of-the-gaps, but as the gaps were filled, it

seemed that God became more and more unnecessary. For example, at one time people did not understand weather systems, and they attributed the movement of the clouds to God. Today, we know that the moon causes ocean currents to flow, those currents cause changes in the atmospheric temperatures, and that results in the cycle of condensation and precipitation. Some of the most complex machines that enable us to understand the very building blocks of the physical world (electrons, protons, etc.) have given us answers to questions about how the foundation of all matter works. With our greater understanding, we might be tempted to say that believing in God is no longer necessary.

But if only those things about creation that we do not understand cause to marvel in wonder, we are missing the point of God's revelation of himself through creation. God doesn't want us to look at creation and be amazed at how much we don't know as if that will cause us to trust him more. He wants us to know how creation works and thus come to marvel at the Creator. The more we know about creation, it would seem, the more we become aware of how absolutely intricate and complex it is. Since God understands it all (and he didn't have to create particle colliders and weather balloons to understand it), we can marvel at how great the wisdom of our God is. In fact, the more we understand about creation, the greater our awe of God should become.

For centuries, perhaps millennia, farmers have known the difference between birds who are predators and birds which tend to be their prey. They knew that hens brood on their clutch in such a way that all the chicks hatch on the same day. That truly is marvellous, especially when we compare the chicken to the eagle. More than just understanding creation and marvelling at how it works, our ancestors also learned how to use the creation for the benefit of humanity. Thus, when we have domesticated chickens and ducks and geese and can now make a three-egg omelette while being assured that the species we know as chickens will not die out. And that too is marvellous. So, not only is the phenomenon of a chicken producing chicks that all hatch on the same day, that same chicken can provide us with a vital food source, making our lives better. We might understand chickens and eagles quite well, and there may be little to learn about either species of bird, but that does not cause us to cease to marvel at how wonderful God is to have thought through how creation works. The more we learn about God's creation, the more we will marvel at the God who made it.

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