



Worlds of Wonder

by Dale Fincher

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When I ponder an image of what Eden must have been like, it awakens a thirst in me for that other country. God makes man and woman to appreciate the ideal and then makes the ideal as a home for them. I hear echoes of it in nature when I hike in the hills of the Eastern Sierras, travel along the jagged edges of the Canadian Rockies, sail by ancient ports on the Adriatic, or soar above the fresh green hills and fields of New Zealand.

Ray Bradbury captures this longing that nature reveals in his short story "Here There Be Tygers." Rocket-men from Earth land on their expedition through the universe and discover a planet that caters to their needs. The fish jump into hot springs and are cooked to perfection. The rain, when it comes, pours about them but never on them. The green grass grows on what looks like a golf course stretched ten thousand miles. And the wind on that planet could catch you up and make you safely fly. It was like "the finest day of the best summer in the

most beautiful year in history." But the time comes that the rocket-men must continue their expedition to other planets. As they look back on the lovely world they leave behind, one of them admits that as he closed the air-lock, he let one of their comrades slip out the hatch and remain on that Edenic world.

I am a fan of Ray Bradbury's insights and am thankful for his writing that story. It reminds me again of how beautiful my own Earth is and how God filled it with good things. When I first read it, I was curious of Bradbury's own view of wonder that runs through many of his stories. Where is it ultimately grounded? In a personal interview, Keith Call of the Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections asked a question along those lines. Bradbury, an admitted Unitarian, responded, "The answer to everything is writing every day of your life. If you write about what you love, you take care of all your passions."⁽¹⁾ It was a noble, but unsatisfying, answer. Wonder is revealed in writing, sure, but this tells nothing of the source of it.

I contrast Bradbury with C. S. Lewis who was an admirer of Bradbury's abilities. Lewis wrote his own story of an Edenic place in his novel *Perelandra*. Lewis describes the first man and women, much like

Adam and Eve on our planet, and what it must have been like to discover Eden and to face temptation. But for Lewis, the source of wonder goes far beyond human limitations. It goes straight to the heart of God, who originally made the warm world with benevolence to provide nourishment without the curse of struggling for survival.

My mind holds these stories beside one another. I believe they are speaking about the same thing, something other-worldly that makes itself present in our world. This wonder is a sunbeam to be traced to the sun, a hint of the face of God.

The apostle Paul tells us, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9-10). The Spirit has revealed in God's Word the true maker of Eden and source of our heart's desire. With breathtaking imagery the apostle John tells us that the Earth will be remade, the curse will be undone (See Rev. 21:1ff.). Then Christ says from his throne, "I am making all things new!" (21:5).

Here is the world that we long for, a world where we find "the finest day of the best summer in the most

beautiful year in history." This is so, because wonder will no longer be a hint. Full joy will find its broad wings before the face of God.

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