

## AUGUST 2017

Dear Friends,

### 'Seeing in Colour'

In June this year our country celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of colour television broadcasts. The technology had been around for some while. John Logie Baird, a Scottish engineer, gave the first public demonstration of a working television system as early as 1926, and two American companies, CBS and NBC, began to transmit colour TV programmes to audiences in the States in the early 1950's. It was a lack of adequate production facilities, the expense involved in converting existing television stations so that they could transmit in colour, and the cost of colour television sets which caused the delay.

But in 1967 colour came to our screens and the effect was dramatic. Natural and artistic beauty could suddenly be conveyed by film-makers far more effectively. David Attenborough, who was at the time the director of the newly established cultural channel, BBC2, saw immediately the potential for programmes on art and the natural world, and the ground-breaking '*Civilisation*' series presented by Kenneth Clarke was a direct result. *Gardener's World* also began around this time and indeed it will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the beginning of next year.

Colour brought not only beauty to our screens but greater understanding too. People had previously found it difficult, for example, to make sense of a game of snooker or appreciate the impact that a bird's bright plumage might have on its courting rituals when everything was in black and white. So although colour did not alter the basic picture that people saw, it did add to the richness of the experience and to the depth of understanding.

Some Christians liken their faith in God to seeing in colour. When we look at the world through the eyes of faith, the people, events and objects remain the same, but they are infused with the 'colour' of God's purposive love and seem to take on a much greater depth of meaning, beauty and value.

Atheists of course want to dismiss this spiritual 'colouring' as an artificial add-on, and say that the 'real world' is only a dull black and white, devoid of any objective value or meaning. But do all of them really believe this? I meet many good humanists, for example, who are heroically and genuinely committed to pursuing the good – to imposing colour, so to speak, on a morally indifferent, black and white universe. But when challenged by others within their own atheistic camp, as to why they believe such a moral (and selflessly sacrificial) commitment to be so important, their answers never sound to my mind very convincing.

The only satisfactory response would be to talk of what is 'good' and 'right' as being more than just their own invention and more than just a culturally relative social construct. It would be to speak of their moral awareness as being grounded somehow in an objective, transcendent reality, a pure Source of Goodness to be sought for its own sake. It would be to speak of the Good as springing from a reality akin to what Christians call 'God'. For when we see with the eyes of faith a world infused with the colour of God's purposive love, we are glimpsing what is ultimately real.

"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone; the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

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