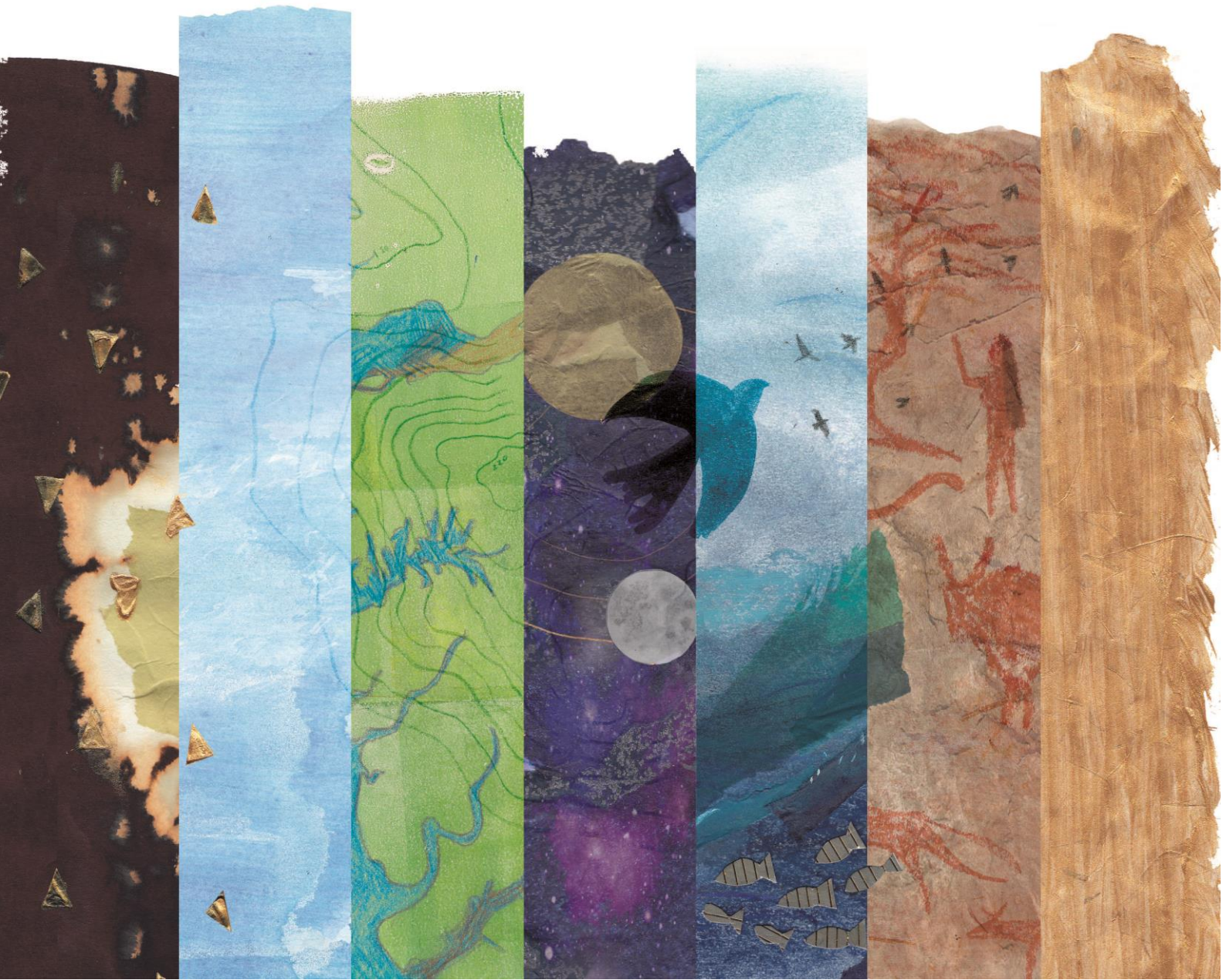


# THE MEANING OF CREATION

Selected extracts from *The Good God: Enjoying Father, Son and Holy Spirit* by Michael Reeves  
(Paternoster, 2012).



## THE MEANING OF CREATION

p. 38

The very nature of the triune God is to be effusive, ebullient and bountiful; the Father rejoices to have another beside him, and he finds his very self in pouring out his love. Creation is about the spreading, the diffusion, the outward explosion of that love. This God is the very opposite of greedy, hungry, selfish emptiness; in his self-giving he naturally pours forth life and goodness. He is, then, the source of all that is good, and that means he is not the sort of God who would call people to himself away from happiness in good things. Goodness and ultimate happiness are to be found with him, not apart from him.

pp. 27-29

All this is to say that the very nature of the triune God is at complete odds with the nature of other gods. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis captured well the difference between the devil (who is the definitive needy and solitary god) and the living God of ecstatic, self-giving, overflowing love.

Screwtape, a senior demon, writes:

One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really *does* want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself – creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over.<sup>a</sup>

... The tragedy is that so many think that the living God is the devilish one here, as if he created us simply to get, to demand, to take from us. But the contrast between the devil and the triune God could hardly be starker: the first is empty, hungry, grasping, envious; the second is super-abundant, generous, radiant and self-giving. And *thus* the triune God can and does create. Grace, then, is not merely his kindness to those who have sinned; the very creation is a work of grace, flowing from God's love. Love is not a mere reaction with this God. In fact, it is not a reaction at all. God's love is creative. *Love comes first*. He gives life and being as a free gift, for his very life, being and goodness is yeasty, spreading out that there may be more that is truly good.

The eighteenth-century New England theologian, Jonathan Edwards, put it strikingly. God's aim in creating the world, he said, *was* himself. But because this God's very *self* is so different from that of any others, that means something utterly different from what it means with other gods. This God's very self is found in giving, not taking. This God is like a fountain of goodness, and so, he said 'seeking

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<sup>a</sup> Glasgow: Collins, 1942, pp. 45-46

himself' *means* seeking 'himself diffused and expressed' – in other word, seeking to have himself, his life and his goodness shared.<sup>b</sup> His very nature is about going out and sharing of his own fullness, and so that is what he is all about. In contrast to all other gods, the exuberant nature of this God means that his pleasure 'is rather a pleasure in diffusing and communicating to the creature, than in receiving from the creature'.<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, p. 459

<sup>c</sup> *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol 8, p. 448