

God is an Artist

Most people who know London know about Cleopatra's Needle. It's an ancient Egyptian obelisk that stands proud on Westminster embankment, a massive but carefully fashioned shaft of granite, on which an ancient potentate proclaims great deeds of valour.

Now if you visit historic Luxor in Egypt, you may stumble on a weathered, half-finished obelisk, lying on its side - in complete contrast to Cleopatra's Needle. There came a moment when the ancient sculptors working on the stone suddenly downed tools. One of them had found a flaw. Only a perfect piece of granite would do in the making of an obelisk. So they abandoned it and instead of standing proud in the Valley of the Kings, or even in present day London or Paris, millennia later this stone lies on its side, forgotten and useless.

God is an artist, but there's an important difference between what he has done and the obelisk sculptors of ancient Luxor. God made human beings in his image. God put on them the stamp of his likeness. We all bear that image but it is flawed because generation on generation we have chosen our own way rather than live according to God's blueprint. No part of us or human society is unspoiled by the folly of choosing our own way rather than living as God intended. This folly is the root

cause of the breakdown of family and community, of environmental devastation, and of all that is the shadow side of being human - ignorance, suffering, pain and death itself.

But there is Good News. Unlike the ancient stonemasons of Luxor, the Divine Artist has never once given up on humanity. He sent a succession of prophets to make known his ways. And - Christians believe - God finally took human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus we see humanity with the image of its Maker unspoiled and unmarred. In dying and rising from death three days later, Jesus declared God's unselfish love and opened the way for humanity to be reconciled to their Maker and enjoy his presence for all eternity.

In the Book of Revelation (chapter 21) there is breathtaking vision of a new social order, a 'new heaven and a new earth' that God is preparing. In this new order, ignorance, tears, suffering, pain and death have been abolished. All of us are invited to be citizens of that new order. We begin by giving our allegiance to Jesus. 'For to as many as received him', wrote one of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and death, 'to them he gave the power to become the sons of God' (John 1:12).

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