

A Sacramental Perspective on Reality, Psalm 104,  
and "A Theology of Things" (Gina Bria)

Some Key Themes from Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*

Christ died for the LIFE of the world (John 6: 51). But what is the nature of this LIFE of the world for which Christ died?

- He did not die for sacred life, and not the secular.
- He did not die for secular life, and not the sacred.
- Rather, Christ died for the *sacramental* life of the world, both the so-called sacred and the so-called secular! In other words, Christ died for the whole of life of the whole world!

According to creation, we recognize God in everything, even food, and give thanks (eucharistic).

"All that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God. It [the world] is divine love made food, made life for man. God blesses everything He creates, and, in biblical language, this means that He makes all creation the sign and means of His presence and wisdom, love and revelation: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." p. 14

According to the fall, we no longer recognize God in anything, and fail to give thanks (non-eucharistic).

Man has loved the world, but as an end in itself and not as transparent to God. He has done it so consistently that it has become something that is 'in the air.' It seems nature for man to experience the world as opaque, and not shot through with the presence of God. It seems natural not to live a life of thanksgiving for God's gift of a world. It seems natural not to be eucharistic." p. 16

According to redemption, we are able to see God once again in everything, even food, especially the meal of thanksgiving — the Lord's Supper — the eucharist, which discloses the meaning of the whole creation!

"... in Christ, life — life in all its totality — was returned to man, given again as sacrament and communion, made Eucharist." p. 20

Biblical Support:

- Genesis 1-2 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth!
- Psalm 19: 1-2. The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.
- Psalm 24: 1. The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.
- Isaiah 6: 3. And one [angel] called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

- Romans 1:20. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.
- Psalm 104. A Divinely Inspired Creation Poem!

Ps. 104:1 **[Creator and His creation]** Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with splendor and majesty, Ps. 104:2 Covering Thyself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. Ps. 104:3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind; Ps. 104:4 He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers.

Ps. 104:5 **[Earth]** He established the earth upon its foundations, So that it will not totter forever and ever. Ps. 104:6 Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment; The waters were standing above the mountains. Ps. 104:7 At Thy rebuke they fled; At the sound of Thy thunder they hurried away. Ps. 104:8 The mountains rose; the valleys sank down To the place which Thou didst establish for them. Ps. 104:9 Thou didst set a boundary that they may not pass over; That they may not return to cover the earth.

Ps. 104:10 **[Water/animals]** He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains; Ps. 104:11 They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. Ps. 104:12 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; They lift up their voices among the branches. Ps. 104:13 He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.

Ps. 104:14 **[Food/drink]** He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, Ps. 104:15 And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart. Ps. 104:16 The trees of the Lord drink their fill, The cedars of Lebanon which He planted, Ps. 104:17 Where the birds build their nests, And the stork, whose home is the fir trees.

Ps. 104:18 The high mountains are for the wild goats; The cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers. **[Time/work]** Ps. 104:19 He made the moon for the seasons; The sun knows the place of its setting. Ps. 104:20 Thou dost appoint darkness and it becomes night, In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about. Ps. 104:21 The young lions roar after their prey, And seek their food from God. Ps. 104:22 When the sun rises they withdraw, And lie down in their dens. Ps. 104:23 Man goes forth to his work And to his labor until evening.

Ps. 104:24 **[Crescendo]** O Lord, how many are Thy works! In wisdom Thou hast made them all; The earth is full of Thy possessions.

Ps. 104:25 **[Seas/fish]** There is the sea, great and broad, In which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great. Ps. 104:26 There the ships move along, And Leviathan, which Thou hast formed to sport in it.

Ps. 104:27 **[Providence]** They all wait for Thee, To give them their food in due season. Ps. 104:28 Thou dost give to them, they gather it up; Thou dost open Thy hand, they are satisfied with good. Ps. 104:29 Thou dost hide Thy face, they are dismayed; Thou dost take away their spirit, they expire, And return to their dust. Ps. 104:30 Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; And Thou dost renew the face of the ground.

Ps. 104:31 **[Glory/worship]** Let the glory of the Lord endure forever; Let the Lord be glad in His works; Ps. 104:32 He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke. Ps. 104:33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. Ps. 104:34 Let my meditation be pleasing to Him; As for me, I shall be glad in the

\Lord.\ Ps. 104:35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, And let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

**Gina Bria, "A Theology of Things" Mars Hill Review**