

Revelation was written to churches that were entering into a time of persecution and suffering. The Holy Spirit's purpose in the book is to encourage the churches to stand fast. In our passage, he does this by giving us a vision of the Heavenly worship. In the vision John sees the throne of God and its glory (Rev 4.1-6), and then four living creatures 四活物各 who never stop crying out "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty" 聖哉,聖哉, 聖哉, 主 神. 是昔在今在以後(.永.)在的全能者. (Rev 4.7-8). And when they cry out in praise, twenty four elders fall down and worship, saying: 二十四位長老, 就俯伏在坐寶座的面前, 敬拜,說

啟 4:11 我們的主, 我們的神, 你是配得榮耀尊貴權柄的.

因為你創造了萬物,並且萬物是因你的旨意被創造而有的.

"Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,

for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."

This song of praise has two halves. It first states that God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power, and then it gives the reason that this is so, namely that he has created all things. The question I want to raise here is this: why do the elders mention God's creation as the thing that manifest that he is worthy of all glory and honor and power? I think there are least three reasons:

1. Through the creation we see God's power and wisdom. The entire bible calls us to reflect on this: what kind of a God could create this world? What kind of power and wisdom is needed? When God addresses Job, he asks him "Could you create the world?", and Job sees immediately that he must repent in dust and ashes 在塵土和爐灰中懊悔. (Job 38-42) When Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wants to teach Israel about their God, he asks them to "lift up your eyes and look to the heavens" and know that God created these things. (See Isa 40.) Paul tells us that those who worship idols are without excuse because in nature all can see what the creator God is like. (Rom 1.18-21). The creation manifests that God is worthy to be praised, because it manifests his wisdom and power.

2. Through the creation we see that God is fundamentally different than any created being. The gods which men even are like created things, only perhaps a little greater. But the true God is fundamentally different than us. In classical theology, we express this fact by saying that God is infinite, immutable and eternal in his being and attributes. Stephen Tong often tells us that God is absolute and that all created things are relative. Can any created thing create other things out of nothing? No created being could create all things, because he would have to create himself – which is impossible. The reason that no human being could create the world is not just that we don't have enough power and wisdom. To create a world out of nothing requires a fundamentally different kind of power and wisdom than we have or even can understand. Surely, the creator God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power!

3. Through the creation we see that God has an absolute right over us, and that we have an absolute responsibility to honor him as our God. The artist or an author has a right over his art work. Similarly, parents have a right to be honored by their children. What would we think of a child who says: "I don't need to honor my parents. So what if they gave me birth. I'm free to reject them without any reason." Surely the same is true of God and his creation. After God created Adam, he commands him not to eat from the tree in the center of the garden. Surely no one will say "What right does God have to command Adam?" It is a ridiculous question. The creator has the right to command us as he pleases, and we are responsible to obey. The human race has no right to refuse to honor God. The person who says that he is free not to worship God condemns himself. Paul states this clearly: "So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him" (Rom 1.20-21). God is worthy of our worship, because he is our creator.

I often tell my students that a deep, true, heartfelt knowledge that God is the creator will make you a good, pious theologian. May God grant us to see with the 24 elders that he is worthy to receive glory and honor and power, for it was he who created all things, and by his will they existed and were created.

(This talk is one of a series given by me at the seminary prayer meeting – Friday's 5.00-6.00 PM. All welcome.)