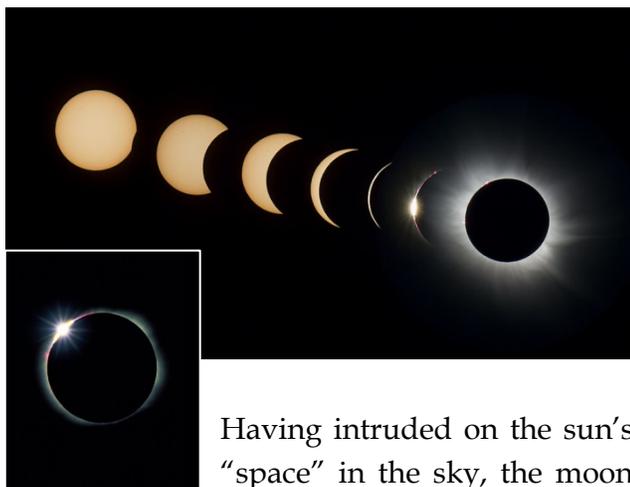




Summer of the Eclipse

On August 21st the sun disappeared. Countless eyes looked heavenward to watch the black curve of the moon devour the light of earth's star along its path toward total eclipse.



Having intruded on the sun's "space" in the sky, the moon proceeded confidently on its course, neither speeding up nor slowing down, never once veering aside or turning back. No one was taken by surprise. Lunar and solar paths intersected at the time and place predicted. The harmonious regularity of cosmic motion runs in tune with the laws of nature, and sun and moon submit to them.

Nature's laws govern us earthbound sky gazers too, for everything beneath the sun lives off of its light. No light, no life. When the sun finally burns out, the ice-cold darkness of death will come to stay. The laws

that bring it to us we can't alter; we are powerless to make the sun change its course. But we can change the course of our life beneath the sun if we submit to the laws of the spirit written on our hearts by the Creator of the Stars.

The sun does not know that it radiates light and warmth, but we do. We know because we have minds—minds that reach far, far beyond the sun to bring to light the fundamental scientific truths that govern the entire universe. Whoever grasps that $2 + 2 = 4$ can set out on that journey of understanding, because the human mind was made for truth, truth that never ceases to draw us farther and wider and deeper into the mystery of the world around us and within us and beyond us.

Watching the disappearing sun together taught an essential lesson about that mystery: truth is something we *find*, not something we *make*. In the path of totality the eclipse was darker and colder and longer-lasting than it was in the path of partiality. But every eye that looked skyward saw the same darkened globe. The full "truth" of the one cosmic event distributed itself to accord with the perspective of viewers near and far. Regardless of their line of sight, all eyes converged in wonderment at the beauty on display before them. Every onlooker had a share in the same heavenly truth revealing itself in the darkened sky.

An imagination that crosses the path of cosmic beauty does not emerge unchanged. Albert Einstein marveled that the universe is proving to be ever more knowable by the

human mind. To him this was “a miracle” since “one should expect a chaotic world which cannot be in any way grasped by thought.” Freeman Dyson took the mounting evidence from modern physics to be a sign “that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming.” The truth of the star fields has been waiting for us to find it, and it’s far more beautiful than anything we could make on our own.

“No one can say, ‘I have the truth,” Pope Benedict XVI wrote. “It is the truth that possesses us,” as it did on August 21st. “We do not possess it but are held by it. Only if we allow ourselves to be guided and moved by the truth, do we remain in it.” For the Truth that we Christians have found is the Way and the Life as well.

As I drove home from Madras that morning, filled with wonder at what I’d witnessed, the words of a song came to mind:

“Lord of the Star Fields, Ancient of Days,
Universe Maker, here’s a song in Your praise.

Voice of the Nova, Smile of the Dew,
All of our yearning only comes home to You.

O Love that fires the sun, keep me burning.
O love that fires the sun, keep me burning.”