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All Things Bright and Beautiful

'All Things Bright and Beautiful' is a popular hymn for weddings, funerals and baptisms. I think it is often chosen by people because it is one of the few Christian hymns they can remember from their school days - although this 19th Century hymn isn't sung by many schools today, so I suspect its days are numbered.



I must confess that I am not a great fan of the hymn, but there is one line in the last verse that particularly connects with me. After expressing thanks to God for creating flowers, birds, sunsets and mountains, the writer says 'He gave us eyes to see them'. It's not just the physical looking that thrills me, but another sort of seeing: the ability to be touched, affected and moved by what we see. This seems to be a uniquely human trait. Certainly my cat doesn't seem very bothered by the autumn leaves, but when I look at the autumn colours something deep inside me responds.

Philosophers have debated the nature of this response for millennia; all I know is that I am grateful for the ability to be touched and changed by the beauty I see all around me. But for me it doesn't stop there. As a Christian, I find myself naturally responding in worship to God who, I believe, is the source of this wonderful gift. So what starts with seeing something physical, leads to an emotional reaction and ultimately a response to God who, as the last line of the hymn says 'has made all things well'.