

## God Our Ultimate Destiny

It is a virtual certainty that some day the sun will die out. Long before then all life on earth will have perished. There is perhaps no example of scientific knowledge that is more congruent with scriptural teaching than this. Here's the biblical way of putting it: "Heaven and earth will pass away."

So what is your life, and my life, all about? Even if we human beings manage not to extinguish ourselves by our own follies, everything that we achieve will be destroyed sooner or later. All the works of our hands, all the knowledge of our minds, all the good deeds, kind thoughts, and gracious gestures, will come to nothing – so far as posterity is concerned. Because at some point what might have been our posterity will cease to be possibility.

Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, in his book, *The Presence of Myth*, argued that we all shield ourselves from the stark reality of our contingent and finite existence with various sorts of mythical ideas. Far from being peculiar to religion, he observed, forms of mythic thought are present in all forms of human endeavor. But they are usually not recognized as such, because they function as a kind of bedrock for human existence. They are the irreducible and irreplaceable means by which we are able to affirm that our lives possess a sense of meaning, continuity, and value.

There are people who do not believe in God. However, I gather from my own experience – and Kolakowski confirms – that few if any of them persist without means to ground the significance of their lives. It also appears that most people, whether religious believers or not, seldom contemplate that some day whatever they now find meaningful will cease.

Whatever else one may think about the idea of God, it seems incontrovertible to me that without some ultimate, enduring, historically transcending Reality, our lives cannot possibly be of any ultimate significance. If you can live with the conviction that your life has only temporal and fleeting significance, and that it will ultimately be for nothing, then the idea of God may not be very compelling. Though I can hardly prove God's existence, neither can I shake the conviction of an Ultimacy that inheres in the immediacies of our existence and that endures, and that therefore – even though I'm making a muddle of it – it really makes a difference how I live.

*Copyright 2010 by Byron C. Bangert*