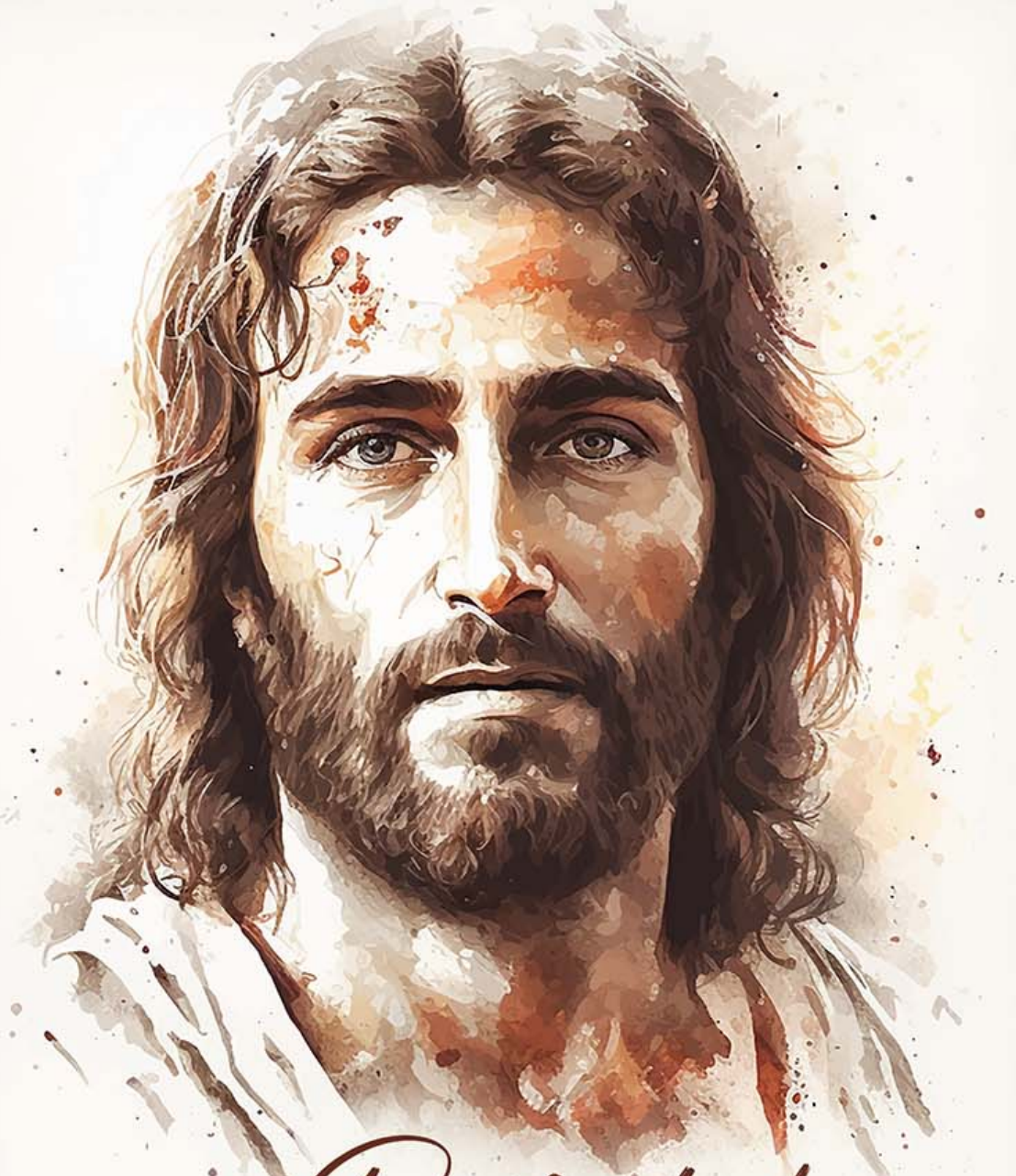


THOMAS HOLTON



Perfected  
in  
Christ

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Paperback ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-4594-2

Ebook ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-3137-2

Published by CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.

2373 W. 700 S., Suite 100, Springville, UT 84663

Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., [www.cedarfort.com](http://www.cedarfort.com)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023911683

Cover design by Shawnda Craig

Cover design © 2023 Cedar Fort, Inc.

Edited and Typeset by Liz Kazandzhy

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed on acid-free paper

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# 1

## CHOOSE SUBLIME OFFERINGS



THE POTENTIAL FOR CREATIVE EXCELLENCE RESIDES WITHIN EACH OF US, AND IT IS vital that we detect and develop this potential. By sensing the divinity of our capacities, we are positioned to offer a truly great gift to God. I also believe we can offer the greatest gifts to God by discovering the things we are most divinely inspired in. There are many unique creative gifts we can offer to God, and we do so by developing them and showcasing them to the glory of God and the blessing of His children.

I believe in the grand design of creation. When I look to the heavens, I am stunned by the scope and scale of our galaxy. Likewise, when I look at the mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, trees, and flowers, I think of the essential beauty of creation. I see the hand of God in the purpose and design of this material world. The beauty of this earth is patterned after the much greater loveliness of heaven. I love to see creations that reflect God's glory, whether physical or artistic. I also see God's goodness in the creative capacities of our lives. Our ability to bring lovely form out of chaos stems from the divine spark within us. We are not brought into being for a fleeting moment only. We are participants in a magnificent design.

I am convinced that excellence, in its pure and pristine form, is evidence of divinity. The marvelous endowments that have been expressed culturally

on this earth are reflections of the gifted excellence of God. Consider the following:

- The excellence of writing reflected in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*
- The musical praise of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*
- The message of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech
- The beauty in Sir Isaac Newton's theology and mathematics
- The linguistic abilities of William Tyndale and his love for God's word
- The breathtaking scope of John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost"
- The sculpting capacity shown in Michelangelo's statue of David
- The astonishing architecture of Sir Christopher Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral

Certainly, something valuable would have been lost if these persons had never "created" these great works. We would be poorer musically, scientifically, and artistically if such persons had not lived or if they had not pursued their great gifts in earnest. It is not simply that their works represent supreme achievements culturally and intellectually. Nor is it just the emotions they evoke, the ideas they share, and the profundities they embody. It is not even the fact that these works carry an almost timeless quality. It is the reality that they are, in at least some measure, inspired. They are gifts from a divine source. They go beyond the normal and mundane. They reach beyond the routine of everyday life and portray, to some degree, the glory and handiwork of God. They are hints at His magnificence, reflections of His beauty, intimations of His power, and testimonies of His grandeur. I believe each one of these works would have been impossible in the absence of a portion of divine intervention. The creators had a portion of the Light of Christ, which gave them some spiritual and moral genius.

I love both revelation-based inspiration and the fields of human knowledge. I see no fundamental incongruity between the truths of revealed religion and the laws of material reality. In verity, I see a beautiful harmony between the physical and spiritual, mind and matter, and time and eternity. God is the author of law, including the laws which provide for the miracles of creation and resurrection, the order of solar systems, the beauty of photosynthesis, the power of gravity, the mechanics of engines, the wonder of music, the awe of art, and the majesty of literature, to name but a few. One day, we will be able to comprehend this unity far better than we do now. I fully agree with Alma that “*all things denote that there is a Supreme Creator*” (Alma 30:44).

But these marvelous endowments from God don't stop there. They are reflected in every area of life. Consider the capabilities of those who use their gifts in their everyday lives:

- Doctors who remember and heal
- Accountants who count and categorize
- Lawyers who distinguish and articulate
- Architects who imagine and design
- Engineers who envision and craft
- Teachers who explain and guide

Lest we think these privileges are limited to those of superb IQ or noble birth, we are well-advised to remember that the gifts of divinity have been given to every person. As we reflect on our lives, seek the opinions of those around us, and experiment with the gifts God has given us (including those we are yet unaware of), then we come to see that each child of God has gifts that are godly in nature, albeit in elementary form. What is the purpose of these abilities? It is for the glory of God and the furtherance of His majestic purposes. It is for the advancement of joy, peace, meaning, and hope among all. It is to bless each and every life.

## UNCOVER THE DIVINE

It is only incrementally that we come to discover the true character of God, truth, creation, intelligence, and ourselves. These discoveries take time, experience, effort, and patience. God reveals our true nature, identity, gifts, abilities, and potential to us through a series of unveilings. We are gradually able to sense who we are and who others are only through a line-upon-line process. This is the process of divine uncovering. When Alma encourages us to have the image of God engraven upon our countenances (see Alma 5), he is speaking both of a one-time experience and an ongoing reality. *Emmanuel* means “God with us,” and we are to come to see—by degrees—that He truly is. God is also in us, but not in some strange, supernatural way. Rather, it is in the sense that through divine revelation and artistic inspiration, we come to see our godlike abilities and those of others.

There are parts of ourselves we have not yet discovered. There are elements of our potentiality that are still to become known, enlarged upon, and brought to full development. We are being renewed regularly in our understanding of things divine. As we catch hold upon this thought, we come to sense security, strength, and exhilaration in the ideas this uncovering brings to light. We are all bound by temporary constraints and limited by various temporal and spiritual restrictions. As we come to Christ, He eases our burdens and makes us greater than before. When Christ ministers to us, He activates this process of uncovering so that we can see all things better. When Paul refers to “[seeing] through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12), part of what he could mean is that we see God, ourselves, and others with a blurred perspective in this mortal life. As truth becomes more visible to us, we eventually come to see as we are seen and know as we are known.

It is a great adventure to ask and answer the following kinds of questions:

- What truths can I yet learn?
- What gifts can I yet receive?

- What abilities can I soon acquire?

- What knowledge can I someday obtain?
- What wisdom can I still develop?

The truth is given to us by God. We all benefit from understanding divine truth and comprehending the reality that we can continually grow into someone more divine. Coming to discern truth, goodness, and beauty in ourselves and others is vital if we are to offer to God the precious contribution that only we can make.

### **HARNESS THE CREATIVE POWER OF GOD’S WORD**

There is real virtue (power) in the word of God. By the power of God’s remarkable words, tremendous works are made manifest. His words formed and changed the world. If we allow it, God’s word can be far more powerful than any other force in our lives. Divine words are creative, life-giving, spectacular, wondrous, amazing, miraculous, and deeply powerful. The words we learn, know, and speak matter. They can contribute to glorious plans and purposes—if they are God’s good words! Indeed, by learning the words of God, we are empowered to do things that would otherwise be impossible. We can come to use words in the way God uses them and thereby come to do great work in His cause. We can bless others through the words we speak—words of comfort, consolation, uplift, warning, encouragement, nourishing, and hope. What words spoken to you by others have bolstered your belief in your capacity to do and be good? It is likely that such words have impacted you greatly for good!

### **UNLOCK OUR DESIRE TO CREATE**

The gospel of God is in truth the ultimate message of magnificent purpose. It envisions something far grander for us than we imagine. In this world, our perspective is often limited by mortal horizons, by difficult circumstances, and by confining attitudes. God seeks to open our eyes, unlock our latent capacity, and increase our expectation. The power to create resides within our divine DNA. We have a longing for the eternal, an

intense desire for the beautiful, and a deep interest in the overarching searching of the soul.

If we are impressed by human achievements in art, science, music, literature, dance, photography, technology, athletics, and other areas in which humans excel, then what might we feel if we were fully introduced to the capabilities of angels and gods? If our creative capacities were improved beyond the confines of mortal constraints, we would be enabled to do better in all these areas. I marvel at our imaginative ingenuity, our venturing forth into previously undiscovered terrain, and our ability to capture that which is beautiful in a moment of time. I am constantly impressed by the amazing achievements in all fields of human endeavor. I believe that without our divine origin, such accomplishments would not be possible. I also sense that it is only as we come to see our nature in divine terms that we can bring to full fruition our creative potential in every area.

## **UNLEASH THE POWER OF CREATION**

God is the ultimate creative genius. He has performed His creative acts in such a way that we are incorporated into His plans and purposes. We are “touched” by His light-filled life. We are moved, energized, and sparked to newness. We “see” something that we are amazed by, drawn to, and electrified through. God is magnetic, attractive, and revitalizing. His influence is shocking, enlivening, and emboldening. He wakes us up from a slumber of complacency, boredom, frustration, and inaction.

God is a relational being. We come from Him, connect with Him, and long for Him. He has gifted us with His divine capacities in a rudimentary but also powerful form. His intelligence is such that it inevitably reveals itself throughout creation. Our capacity reflects His. Our greatness stems from His mighty power. Our ability with language, mathematics, art, science, and everything else mirrors His phenomenal nature. He shares His power with us. We see His goodness, love, courage, and a thousand other attributes of His nature being manifest in and through us. We are something of the living embodiment of His creative sharing.

As we come to know that we are His, we are empowered to unleash our creative gifts in ways that will bless the world, in a manner that will ignite the spark for greatness in others. Every wonderful gift, every holy trait, every precious talent, every worthwhile endeavor—these are all the inheritance of Almighty God to His children. It is therefore our special privilege to exercise our gifts in godlike ways. It is also essential that our gifts be used in such a way that they benefit and bless others. We relay permission, sanction, and excitement to others as we use our God-granted endowments in the cause of generating more light, greater hope, additional love, increased faith, and enhanced joy in this world.

When we see God as our Father who gifts us with His precious powers, we want to be close to Him. We want to be with Him and be like Him. Also, we want to use our influence to invite and encourage others to draw close to Him. Our words are then used to ignite the spark of faith in others. Our gifts are directed toward inspiring others to seek their own gifts for the glory of God. Our talents are used to enrich the lives of our fellow beings.

We are all co-creators with God. We create many things in this world. We have the innate capacity to be a light to others, a source of encouragement, a beacon for growth. When we turn our attention to that which truly adds value, to that which magnifies the good, to that which generates creativity, to that which endorses generosity, and to that which promotes the sharing of our energies in positive ways, then we are in touch with our creative destiny. We are living the way God designed us to live—as giving, sharing, serving, productive creators.

Creation is a moving force by its very nature. Creation is electrifying. It is the process of multiplicity through power. Creation is not a stale, boring, dry event. It is a transfer of energy, a migration of potentiality. Kinetic creation provides metaphorical light and heat. God moves in and through us. Whether we desire to excel in academic pursuits, artistic efforts, literary endeavors, talent competitions, administrative roles, protective tasks, or leadership functions, we are most successful when we use the divine power of God to optimal effect. This power infuses the world with glory, truth,

enlightenment, and happiness. Creation grounded in God is magnificent, purposeful, and triumphant.

A creator does not just use their own power to make exciting things happen—they induct the minds, hearts, spirits, and bodies of others into the cause. A wise person does not simply use the power of their own mind or body to accomplish creative outflow. Rather, they engage the creative spark to ignite the minds and bodies of others in service of the generation of new and beautiful things. When we see others using imagination to turn concepts into actuality, we are beckoned to do likewise. Music begets more music, poetry inspires further poetry, love encourages additional love, and so on. It is a domino effect. Ideas catch fire by being relayed with enthusiasm from one person to another. They spread contagiously. When one person uses their creative gift well, it ignites a sense of vision for others to do likewise.

Great encouragement comes when others teach us how to flourish. For example, when a talented performer showcases their skills to the world, others are influenced to do likewise. The “magic” of excellence rubs off on us. It educates us in terms of what is achievable. It invites us to do and be more. It affects us profoundly as we are inspired and motivated to change our perception of what might be done in our own lives and in the world around us. This influential force of creation transmits a potent capacity to us. We are enlivened by witnessing such flowing creative power.

In conclusion, our most sublime offerings to God are those that represent the best we have to offer. As we seek God first in our lives, He makes us into better versions of ourselves. His words and creative abilities transform us into creative beings. Let us dig deep and reach high in offering the best of ourselves to God.

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