I n August 1989, Voy-
ager 2 swooped low
over the north pole of
Neptune. It was four
planets and more than 2.8 bil-
lion miles from Earth. Hurtling
along at more than 61,000 mph, it
passed within a mere 3,000 miles of
Neptune’s surface. By Newsweek’s
reckoning, this accomplishment was
about the same as sinking a 2,260-
mile putt on a cosmic golf course.

For 14 years, the faithful un-
manned spacecraft sent back spec-
tacular color photographs of the
scenery along the way. It showed new
views of the universe from a close-
up vantage point—the rings of Sat-
urn, Jupiter and its moons, Uranus,
and Neptune. Meantime it also sig-
naled five trillion bits of scientific
information for scientists to catalog
and analyze. By the time the latest
batch of data came in from Neptune,
the radio signal was so weak—a 10-
quadrillionth of a watt—that it took
38 giant radio antennas on four con-
tinents to catch it.

Weighing a little less than a ton,
Voyager 2 has since escaped the pull of Ne-
tune’s gravity. Now it is
continuing on its odyssey
into infinity. Scientists say that by
the year 2020 its generators will no
longer be able to power communica-
tions so far back to Earth. After that
it will never be heard from again but
it will continue on. Thirty-eight cen-
turies from now it is supposed to
pass within 1.7 light-years of Ross
248, a cool, red, twinkling star. In
nearly 300 centuries it will pass
within 4.3 light-years of Sirius.

The mission of Voyager 2 has been
described by scientists and the media
as humanity’s most successful
achievement in space exploration. Yet
as exciting as this accomplishment
was, it could never compare to the
awesome vastness of the cosmos and
of what that vastness has to say about
God’s unfathomable creative power.

“The heavens declare the glory of
God; And the firmament shows His
handiwork” (Ps. 19:1, NKJV). The
psalmist didn’t need 38 giant radio
antennas on four continents to pick
up messages from outer space.

Alas, it is not so for everyone.

In 1927 Wilbur Daniel Steele
published a short story entitled “The
Man Who Saw Through Heaven.” The
central character, Hubert Diana,
visited an observatory on the eve of
his departure by ship as a Christian
missionary assigned to Africa. The
narrator of the story described him
in the following way: “Curiously
impervious to little questionings, he
had never been aware that his faith
was anywhere attacked.”

So when Hubert Diana peered
through a telescope for the first time
in his life and realized the utter vast-
ness of the universe, he was struck
with his own inconsequence. When
a cynical astronomer commented
that in such a vast universe there was
no way of knowing with certainty
whether our lowly Earth was any-
ingthing more than the jewel in the fin-
ger ring of one of countless organ-
isms a million times greater than we,
Hubert Diana’s faith suffered a melt-
down. He boarded the ship the next
day in a daze, and by the time he
reached Africa, he apparently lost his
mind completely. Rather than
reporting for his assignment, he dis-
appeared.

The rest of the story recounts the
efforts four years later of a search
party for Hubert Diana, led by his
intrepid wife and a representative of
the mission society who had as-
signed him to Africa. In his wander-
ings, like a wild-eyed pagan prophet,
he had harangued anyone who
would listen about the infinite

**Work Station Two**

Gary B. Swanson
inconsequence of humankind. Curiously, in every village he had visited, he had created small mud sculptures of creatures of all shapes and forms. He had terrorized the superstitious villagers and had come to be known as “Father Witch.”

As the search party grew ever closer to catching up with him, however, they noticed that the mud sculptures appeared to be growing increasingly complex, more and more humanlike. At last they reached the place where, five weeks before, he had died apparently of tropical illnesses and been buried by nervous villagers. Nearby, in a low hut, they came upon his last sculpture: it appeared to be formed much like a human seated on a crude throne, its head inclined toward its hand, on one finger of which Hubert Diana had slipped his own finger ring. And, in response to queries from the search party, one of the villagers unknowingly revealed the derivation of the name “Father Witch”: they had misunderstood his meaning when they’d heard him pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven...”

Before his death, he had returned to his faith.

What do we do when we peer through the telescope of scientific “knowledge”? How do we respond when faith and science apparently contradict one another? These are questions that we must address, or someday our faith will be at risk of meltdown.

The question of Earth’s origin, for example, has polarized our society, and, unfortunately, it has become a political issue. It is the flashpoint for much debate—especially in public education. One of the key questions in this issue is: How do we interpret the information that we observe from nature? Christians would phrase it this way: How do we interpret the information that God has revealed to us through nature?

The psalmist had no doubt. Neither did the prophets: “The one who forms the mountains, creates the wind, reveals his thoughts to mortals, makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!” (Amos 4:13, NKJV).

And the apostle Paul stated it even more assertively: “From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God” (Rom. 1:20, NLT).

No excuse for meltdown!