

If I were to ask you which part of the Bible speaks of Creation, I think most would immediately mention the first two chapters of Genesis. But these two opening chapters of the Bible are by no means all the Bible has to say on the subject. There are in addition passages in the Book Job, several of the Psalms (including Ps 8 that we used this morning) as well as portions of the Book Proverbs. We read one of those portions as our Old Testament lesson this morning. These passages look not so much at the mechanics of creation as the purpose behind it.

For many people science and faith are seen to present two conflicting, indeed mutually exclusive, views of the world in which we live. This apparent contradiction is often cited as a reason against holding a belief in God. I have always resisted this view. As I have mentioned before one of the most formative influences on me as I sought to hold together my love of physics and my faith in God was the late Professor Ernst Walton, Nobel Prize winner and Professor of Physics when I was at Trinity. Speaking one Sunday evening in College Chapel, he spoke of the art critic studying the work of great human artists and the scientist studying the work of the greatest artist of all. The phrase ‘the greatest artist of all’ has always struck me as a very powerful metaphor for God. The great artists bring something of themselves to their work; in their works we see something of them, their personality, their nature. The great artist is never remote from his or her work; it is never a casual doodling – she or he puts something of themselves into their work.

‘The greatest artist of all’, to use Professor Walton’s metaphor, puts something of himself into this world he has created. He has an abiding commitment to his work, and in particular man.

The passage we read from the Book Proverbs speaks of Wisdom, created before the beginning of the world, who works with God in the work of creation itself. This whole passage speaks to me of the underlying order of creation to which the work of the scientist bears witness. But the ordered creation the scientist observes is not just a lifeless machine

made by some celestial engineer. For the writer speaks not just of the underlying order to the world in which we live but also of an underlying purpose that lies at the very heart of creation..

We are challenged, as we look at the world, as we marvel at the beauty of nature whether it be in the sunset and sweep of a mountain range, the majesty of the night sky or the intricacy of a snow flake, the delicacy of a flower or the amazing world of the atom; we are challenged to look beyond all that to the God behind it all.

The German theologian, Rudolph Bultmann, wrote, ‘to acknowledge God as Creator is to acknowledge myself as his creature and to bow down and worship.’ To recognise order and purpose in the created order is to begin to acknowledge order and purpose in our own lives. I find that in the context of my relationship with God. In the words of the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church; ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.’

As I read the passage from Proverbs that we read from today, my mind recalls those opening words of St John’s Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. *John 1:1-4*

This emphasises for me that the order and coherence that I am talking about is essentially personal. My search for meaning and purpose in the world eventually moves into the sphere of encounter – as is the experience of any of us who have looked at a sunset or night sky and have been moved to wonder how all this came to be and have proclaimed in their hearts ‘How great thou art!’. For you never encounter a thing – you encounter a person.

I cannot be indifferent to this person whom I encounter. As Bultmann said, to acknowledge God as creator is to acknowledge myself as his creature and to bow down and worship.

I also discover in the words of Proverbs and those opening words of John's Gospel that 'that greatest artist of all' (to use Professor's Walton's words) is totally committed to his work, totally committed to this strange creature man that he has placed at the heart of his creation. And I discover the profound truth behind those words to Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only son'. – the commitment is total.

We hear a great deal these days of the importance of living in harmony with creation. Many of the problems of the environment, global warming, pollution, disposal of nuclear waste are seen as symptomatic of our failure in this regard. To truly live in harmony with creation I need to live in harmony with my creator. This is where the personal dimension of creation, the commitment of the creator to his creation becomes so important. Amidst all the demands for attention in our busy world, we so often miss out on the importance of this need for harmony with our creator. As we are reminded in those opening verses of St John Gospel:

¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, *John 1:11-12*

This whole area of harmony and disharmony with creation, with the creator has important implications for this whole area of healing that is at the heart of our 11 o'clock service. Healing that goes beyond the physical manifestation of bodily ailment, the addresses the whole area of 'diss-ease' that is so much part of contemporary life. This in turn highlights the importance of the faith relationship between creator and creature, my response to the God who created me, who loves me and redeemed me in Christ. This harmony with the creator which I experience through faith means I find him not just in things of beauty. I

can know that he is with us in the darker times of danger, of anxiety and in so doing we can find something of the peace that God alone can give.

This Trinity Sunday, we have in our meandering thoughts been reflecting on the totality of our relationship with God, ‘that greatest artist of all’, a God who gives himself in his work of creation and in his ongoing commitment to it in the giving of his Son. May we find that harmony with him that is his will for us, finding in him the very source of our being, the very foundation of our hope and the source of our strength and so find that peace that passes all understanding, that ultimate healing that God alone can give.