

Second Sunday before Lent, Sexagesima, Year B 15 February 2009

Creation Sunday

Proverbs 8: 1,22-31

Colossians 1: 15-20

Gospel: John 1: 1-14

Psalm 104:26-end (for reference during the sermon)

Today's readings are the heart of my theology. These comments are very personal.

The first lesson – look at it – takes us to the moment before the big bang. It is one of those texts through which astronomers, physicists and theologians begin to speak to each other. The moment before creation merges into eternity.

Here is the role and place of Lady Wisdom (Sophia) in creation, created first of all, the crafts(wo)man at Yahweh's side, as the universe emerges from Yahweh's womb.

- Lady Wisdom intermediate between God and creation, between divine and human.
- Lady Wisdom delighting in humanity as Yahweh delights in her.
Biblical (Holy) Wisdom expresses the divine ordering of creation. Human responsibility to God involves living within the harmony of God's order, the order of God our mother.
- Bulgakov: wisdom is 'the nature of God'
- Bulgakov: wisdom is love of love. Obedience to Wisdom is wise social action.

Wisdom: intermediate between Divine and human.

Remind you of anything?

Over the last 2000 years the church has come to equate lady wisdom to the Son of God before the incarnation: Old testament Christ, if you like.

Look at the Gospel, surely a derivation of Proverbs 8. It describes a pre-existent *something* that is the agent of creation, that we call Jesus of Nazareth. And look at the epistle where Christ is creator and first-born: even Paul likes these ideas.

Sophia, logos, the pre-existent Christ. Wisdom, logic ('word'), the pre-existent Christ. The wisdom present alongside the creator at creation is the as yet formless Christ, Christ before his human birth.

Your brain is hurting: you've never heard of all this? Oh yes you have, every week.

- CW: eternally begotten of the Father
- BCP: Begotten of his Father before all worlds

Now: the Lord rejoices in creation.

Look at the psalm:

- the Lord rejoices in 'things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts'
- the daily provision of bread and wine recalls eucharist, and *erotic love, longing love*.
The earth is full of the glory of the Divine. Every living thing, every aspect of life on the planet. There is nothing that we do that is not capable of expressing the glory of creation. There is nothing in the natural cosmos that does not express the glory of the creator. Bacteria. Viruses. Moulds. Fungi. Plants. Insects. Fish. Mammals like you, me. The retina. The hearing mechanism. Every biological function. The solar winds that give us the northern lights ...
In reason's ear they all rejoice, and utter forth a glorious voice, for ever singing as they shine, 'the hand that made us is divine.'

So what?

The gospel tells us that we too can become sons and daughters of the Divine. That is the fruit of heeding what he did say. Living according to Holy Wisdom, according to the logos of the cosmos, according to the words of Jesus.

Yes, we mess up. We make decisions based on pride, arrogance, hypocrisy. It's a mess. What matters is our response to this mess. Look how the Divine responded: got his hands dirty in spectacular fashion and became one of us. Let us respond to the glory that is around us by getting our hands dirty and becoming like him.

We could build walls to separate us from the mess. The trouble with putting up walls, as Oscar Wilde's selfish giant found to his distress, is that we also prevent the fun and joy out there from warming our cold hearts. That's what happened to Kay in the Snow Queen, who sought icy perfection, and could be saved only by Gerda's messy tears.

We need to be open to the mess of humanity. We are called to be open to the glory of the Divine that is in every living thing. We are called to enjoy life.

- A task for each one of us as individuals: let us tear down walls that keep us snug and warm within, but that keep the world out. That's why so many old people are lonely.

- A task for the Christian church: let us tear down walls that keep us thinking we're right, but that fail to recognize the validity of others' vision. That's why there are so many religious conflicts.
- A task for individual churches: let us tear down walls that have preserve us in aspic, but that fail to reach out to the community around us. If we don't do that, the churches will die. Remember, obedience to Wisdom is wise social action.

Today's readings are glorious readings. They are a command for us to enjoy and take delight in creation, as does the divine creator. They have cosmic implications for the union of science and theology, for the union of individual and community, for the union of divine and human.

The divine became human so that humans might become divine. The glory of God is human life lived to the full.

Let us stand and say the psalm, and then move straight to the prayers

O Lord, how manifold are thy works ...

... I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will praise my God while I have my being.