



**THOUGHTS FOR SUNDAY
2 BEFORE LENT
7 FEBRUARY 2021**

Beginnings

Proverbs 8:1, 22-31, Colossians 1:15-20, John 1:1-14

The three lessons appointed for this Sunday are all much more obviously related to each other than sometimes is the case. All three concern themselves with the beginning, and the time before creation, and all are couched in high-flown words with striking images that, at one level may seem to have little enough to do with the concerns of everyday life. Indeed, it has been thought by some that this prologue to S. John's gospel was a later addition, placed there to 'capture the attention of those of a philosophic turn of mind', but it seems to me that all three have a more important purpose than that.

People throughout history seem to have evidenced a desire to explain how things came to be, and many have come to the conclusion of God as the source of being. What any individual might have meant by 'God' is, of course, open to enormously wide interpretation, but these three views, from the Judao/Christian perspective clearly introduce another thing or person into the process of creation, calling him/her 'wisdom', 'Christ' or 'the Word' respectively. This extra person appears as the animating force in the creation process, the thing that gives meaning as well as being to the creation and which is as far removed as possible from the image of God the great clockmaker, who, having set up the mechanics of creation then absents himself entirely from his handiwork and lets it run on in its own way, indifferent to its progress or dissolution.

In Christian theology 'the Word' has become entirely identified as the second person of the Trinity, the Son, and so we see him not only as being there at the beginning, but coming again in his incarnation and his earthly ministry and acting decisively in his passion, death, resurrection and ascension to secure for eternity the connection between the Creator and the creation. If this is the case it places us, as Christian believers as well as parts of the creation, in an entirely different relationship with the Creator, one both much more secure, but also potentially much more demanding in terms of our responsibilities towards our stewardship of that part of the creation in which we live. This should not only affect our attitude towards the big issues of climate change, or overcoming the tide of the current plague, but also our everyday interactions with other people and with the part of creation with which we live day by day. In this we have constant access to the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit, who is a present 'comforter' (one that is strong with) to support us. If we can live conscious of this closeness of God, we shall experience creation not only as some magnificent but frightening thing beyond our comprehension, but as something bearing in its every part the mark of a loving Creator, whose purposes are wholly good.

Mentioning Emperor Justinian in last week's sermon reminded me of another of his memorials, the building of the magnificent cathedral church (as it then was), *Hagia Sophia* (Holy Wisdom), in Constantinople in 537 AD. This 'wisdom', to whom the church was dedicated, is exactly the 'wisdom' of Proverbs, the 'Christ' of Paul, writing to the Colossians and 'the Word' of John, writing his gospel.

Clive Lemmon