

A Faith to Live By...

Sermons on the Apostles' Creed

2. "God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth ..."

It might seem natural to begin this week's study by talking about the image of God as 'Father'. But I'm not going to do so, because I looked at that in detail in our series on the Lord's Prayer, and that material is still available for you to look at on the congregation's website under 'Resources'. Just scroll down, and you'll find it. So, to avoid needless repetition or self-plagiarising, I'm going to begin this week by considering the word 'Almighty'.

God, the Father Almighty

That God is powerful might seem to us to be too obvious to need saying; but that's only because we are already so familiar with a cluster of ideas about God from Scripture and other sources. And that God is 'all-powerful' (which is what I take 'Almighty' here to mean) is actually a very distinctive claim. In the Old Testament, where many of our most significant theological ideas were worked out and shaped up, it's not uncommon to find the unguarded suggestion that Israel's God, Yahweh (translated in English versions of the Bible as 'the LORD'), was one among any number of deities attached to the various nations. So, for instance, Psalm 95:3 refers to Yahweh as 'a great God, and a great King above all gods'. By the time the Old Testament as a whole was written up and edited into something resembling what we know today, Israel had come increasingly to the realization that Yahweh was in reality the 'only Lord,' these other 'gods' being in effect the product of peoples' religious imagination or false hopes. Throughout, though, even when the reality of other 'gods' was seriously entertained, what was vital to Israel was the conviction that Yahweh was incomparable, capable of great deeds that set him apart decisively



from any other putative deity – ‘all powerful’ in ways that elevated him into a category of his own. So, in the ‘Song of Moses’ after the exodus from Egypt we find: ‘Who is like you, Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like you ... awesome in



splendour, doing wonders?’ And the answer is, of course, *no one!* Yahweh alone has sovereignty over all things, including any ‘gods’ who may be hanging around. He alone is ‘Almighty’, a claim which, as the Old Testament took shape, came to be associated particularly with Israel’s understanding that Yahweh, the God in

whom she believed and trusted, was the one who had *created* all things (Psa. 95:4-5). He alone is ‘without beginning and without end’ (Isa. 43:10); he alone is able to work without hindrance or resistance (Isa. 43:13); he alone is all-powerful.

By the time of the New Testament this association of Israel’s God with power was so well-established that ‘the Power’ could function perfectly well as a convenient synonym for God (which was very useful, because by this time even uttering God’s proper name, Yahweh, was proscribed as sacrilegious). So, for example, in Mark 14:62, Jesus tells the High Priest ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power’, a statement which is blasphemous not because Jesus speaks the divine name (which he avoids doing), but precisely because what he says in effect is that

he, Jesus, will be seated at God’s right hand – will share in God’s own unique identity and power. That’s a claim that renders religious slips of the tongue trivial by comparison!

That image, of course, is one borrowed from the corridors of human power, where a king or



potentate would be seated on the throne, and anyone sitting at his right hand would naturally be either his son or some other exalted figure given to share in the exercise of royal authority while others grovelled on their knees and reversed out of the throne room in order to avoid turning their backs on the resplendent vision of the 'power in the land' (and probably losing their heads for doing so!). It's an image familiar from a hundred or more Hollywood versions of ancient as well as more recent history. And it raises an important theological question. Is God's rule *really*



like that? And does the appeal to that sort of imagery not seem to legitimate sorts of human power that we have come to recognize as highly problematic? In the age of democracies

and constitutional rather than absolute monarchies, do we not experience an odd crunch of gears when such models of power are associated with God?

These are important questions not to be shirked. Perhaps the first thing to say is that any image works with an interplay of likeness and unlikeness. That's true, say, of the image of God as Shepherd. God is *like* a shepherd in some ways (he cares for his 'flock', and is willing to risk himself in order to rescue wayward and foolish 'sheep'), but *unlike* a shepherd in other ways (he doesn't spend days and nights sitting in a field or on a mountainside). So, the fact that God is pictured as like a human potentate on a throne does not involve us in supposing that all characteristics of such power arrangements are relevant in God's case; there will be some ways in which God is wholly unlike any human Sovereign, and we need to figure out what those are. In biblical times, of course, there weren't any parliamentary democracies or constitutional monarchs of the sort we are used to, and this model of human rulers who, within their territories, wielded absolute power was the one most familiar and therefore most obvious to work with. We sometimes refer to those who seem to aspire to that sort of power, in politics or elsewhere, as 'playing God'; but that is, I

think, a mistake. Because while the creed insists that God is 'Almighty', all-powerful, that does not entail us in picturing God as essentially like a human despot, except wielding even *more* power. That would be quite wrong, and potentially dangerous.

God's power is not absolute. That is to say, the claim that God is 'Almighty' does not and cannot mean that God can do *absolutely anything*. It may well be true in some sense that, as the angel tells Mary, '*nothing* is impossible with God' (Luke 1:37), but there are at least two categories of things that fall outside this generous inclusivity.

Sceptics have sometimes mocked the idea of an all-powerful God by asking, for instance, whether God is powerful enough to make a rock so heavy that even he cannot pick it up. Such mental games (can God make a triangle with four sides, or



a square circle, etc.) are entertaining, but not serious objections to the creed's claim, even though we are compelled to answer them in the negative. These, we may confidently say, are things that God cannot 'do' not because his power is limited, but because, as C. S. Lewis points out, nonsense remains nonsense even when it is prefaced by the question 'can God?' God may be able to do all that is intrinsically possible; that even he cannot do the intrinsically impossible is not an admission of his weakness, it is simply a tautology.

The other category of things that God 'cannot do', though, is far more important. We could sum it up in the words of 2 Tim 2:13 - 'God', Paul writes, 'cannot deny himself'. Put more positively, God is faithful; faithful to his own character, and faithful to the promises and purposes issuing from that character in his dealings with us as Creator. Again, to say this is not to suggest that God's power runs up against some sort of arbitrary limit that, were he truly 'Almighty', he would be able to break through. It is simply to acknowledge that God, the ultimate reality, is a

moral reality, and his freedom and power are constrained by who he is. So, that word 'Father' turns out to have a vital importance here after all. The sort of 'power' that God exercises without limit, the creed is telling us, is no random or capricious or morally neutral force, but the sort of power proper to one whose character is that of a Father. So, despite all the political imagery that comes into play, what matters most for faith is that the one who alone is all-powerful is the one we know as our Father in heaven. To call God 'Almighty', therefore, is not, for Christians, a logical inference



that any intelligent person might make ('in order to create the world, God must be all-powerful!'). It has a very distinct moral and spiritual force. The world, it tells us, and we with it are in the hands of someone infinitely

good, loving, merciful and faithful, and not just some cosmic office administrator or (worse still) a morally unstable dictator on steroids.

To confess God as the 'Father Almighty', therefore, is in effect to insist and to trust that God is capable of accomplishing his purposes and promises in creation and redemption, and that nothing (other than the constraints of his own character, which are in any case already expressed in those same purposes and promises) can stand in the way of that accomplishment. In accordance with the ways in which those purposes and promises are unfolded in the narrative of Scripture, it is clear that this involves God in working with some recalcitrant materials and some self-imposed challenges. He has created human beings with a real measure of freedom, and a world with its own integrity and contingency and order, both of which, being who he is, he must work with rather than simply riding roughshod over them. It's

difficult for us to imagine how that might be possible. One suggestion has been to picture God as like a grand chess master who is so good that there is never any question that he will win the game, no matter what moves his



opponent makes, and despite the fact that, along the way, the moves he must make to win remain far from clear. But pictures like that, though suggestive, are only of limited use. Therefore, as one writer puts it, 'we should not be surprised that the working out of (God's) gracious purposes is often painfully obscure to us, that our patience is often tried to the limit, and that belief in God as both good and almighty is often exceedingly difficult'.

Again, such belief is no matter of natural or logical inference from the evidence of our lives in the world. It is a matter of faith in who God has revealed himself to be in Jesus Christ. And it involves a form of 'power', we must not forget, that is *so* powerful as to be able, in the pursuit of its purposes, to transform itself into its

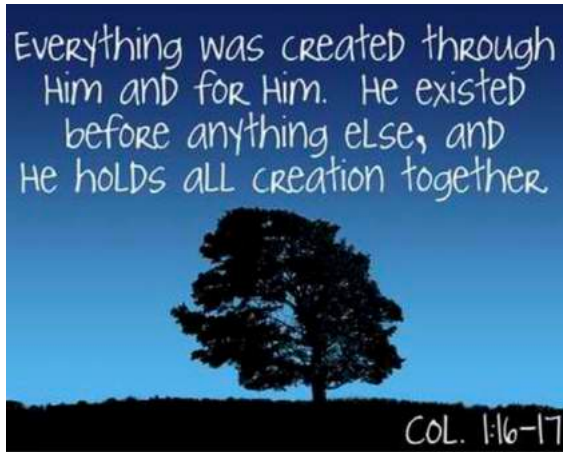


opposite, in the manifest weakness of Jesus suffering and death on the cross. There is no greater challenge to or critique of our human notions of what power is or looks like than that. And, since all human power is derived ultimately from God's own and answerable to God (Romans 13:1-2), and ought

therefore to conform to its pattern and character, this should be a sobering thought for any who exercise it, no matter what the context.

Creator of heaven and earth

It is this same all-powerful God, the one known to us as Father, who, the creed insists is the Creator, who called all things into existence and who holds them from moment to moment in existence. 'Heaven and earth' is Scripture's shorthand for all that exists beside God. The Nicene Creed, which we use on a Sunday morning, is a bit more precise at this point, borrowing Paul's terminology in Colossians 1:16 and referring instead to 'all things, visible and invisible'. That means the same thing, but



it reminds us helpfully that so-called 'spiritual' realities as well as material ones are part of a cosmos that exists only because God chose that it should, and which depends utterly for its continued existence on his faithfulness in sustaining it, constantly infusing into it, as it were, fresh creative energy and intent. Were God

to withdraw from it, or to withdraw his creative will from it, it would cease to be. Thus, the Psalmist speaks of the animal creation: 'When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground' (Psa. 104:29-30). But it's the same whether it is animals, or humans, or angels, or 'spiritual' beings of other sorts, or planets and stars that we have in mind. God holds them in being, and without that holding they would disappear in an instant. That they do not, that we do not disappear in that way, not even when what we do is identifiably displeasing, disrespectful, even hateful to God, is again due to the fact that his creative power is not that of some capricious deity, but the creative power of a Father who is true to himself and to his purposes and promises. God is good, and having created the world he will not let it go until his good purposes for it are fulfilled.

It's important to stress this, because it might otherwise be supposed that God created out of some need or lack in himself, that he gets an important trade-off from the world's existence, and so *cannot* let it go without leaving himself unfulfilled or

incomplete. In the Bible it is always God's faithfulness, to himself and to us, that is given as the reason for his continuing goodness to a world undeserving of it and incapable as yet of responding to it properly. This is important because, to return to another facet of knowing God as Father, we can say that it is out of love that God creates. Were it out of need or a sense of lack in himself, creating would be a self-serving and ultimately selfish action; and, of course, it would make God in some sense dependent



on our continued existence. Scripture will have none of that. We are utterly dependent on God, but God is dependent on no one. And yet, it is perfectly proper to say that, God being who God is, it 'comes naturally' to him to create a world to share in his joy and his love and to enjoy his glory. God (who is eternally not just Father, but Son and Spirit too) is fulfilled in himself, an eternal communion of goodness, love and joy; and, far from a deficit or lack, creation is better thought of as issuing forth from an overflowing or fullness of God's joy, which longs to share itself, and creates in order that it may bless others with such sharing.

So, it is not a limitation of God's character or nature which leads to his decision to create, but precisely a fullness, the natural expression of his Fatherly goodness and



love. And it is not selfish, but precisely *selfless*; because calling a world into being and holding it in being entails taking responsibility for its existence, loving it in a manner which will become costly, involving finally the costliness of the cross. The fact that God did not *have* to create, but *chose* to do so, is thus very important. As one theologian expresses it, God, in the depths of his eternity, chose *not* to be God without us, but to be God-with-us, and God for us.

That God is Creator also reinforces what the creed has already told us, namely, that God is all-powerful, and has sovereign authority over all things that exist. It also sets God apart decisively from everything and anything else that exists ('heaven and earth'). God is without beginning and without end, whereas the remainder of reality is determined by time (it has a beginning and will come to an end) and, in the case of physical things, space too. God is the sole originator of things. Theologians have sometimes expressed this by saying that God created 'out of nothing' (*ex nihilo*), which is an awkward and not altogether helpful phrase. But its point is simple enough and captures a biblical insight. If God is indeed Creator of heaven and earth, of all things that exist beside God himself, then prior to his creative act there *was* nothing *beside* God. God was all there was. That's a very difficult circumstance for us to imagine, because our minds are adapted to deal with things that exist in time and space. So, if we close our eyes and try to imagine a situation in which God is all there is, we'll probably end up picturing God existing in some sort of dark space. But dark spaces themselves are part of the world as God has created it! In fact, strictly speaking, we can't even properly talk about a circumstance 'prior' to God's creative act, because time as we know it, with its 'before' and 'after', is also part of the world God has made! It gets complicated!! (And I wouldn't worry too much if your imagination, like mine, runs up against the buffers at this point!) But one simple and



important lesson to glean from it God has not, like a human craftsman, builder or artist, fashioned the cosmos out of pre-existing materials. Because before creation (there we go again ... 'before'...) there was only God. Jewsons and B&Q came later! And that means that whatever existed and exists alongside

God was stuff of his choosing and making, no matter how resistant and recalcitrant it may have turned out to be. He made it. And if it presents him with limits and challenges, they are only ones that he himself has chosen to live and to work with. God is all-powerful in relation to whatever exists, because he made it, and he made it in accordance with a purpose, a plan, a promise that sprang naturally from his character as Father. And, we're told in the Genesis story about creation, he got great

pleasure from doing so, because what he made was good and satisfying – so much so that he took time off straight afterwards just to enjoy it and drink it all in.

One way of refreshing your reading of the Genesis creation story might be to picture God as an artist (albeit one who has already chosen and created the relevant raw materials), whose reiterated ‘Let there be ...!’ is less an authoritative command to a host of minions scurrying round to obey,



than an excited suggestion issuing forth from the divine imagination as it realizes ever more wonderful, colourful and beautiful possibilities! No image of God’s mode of creating and fashioning the world is perfect, and no doubt this one has its limitations. But it perhaps captures something of the sense of joy and satisfaction and love which poured out of God as the motive-force and inspiration for creation.

I don’t want to waste much space talking about the creation story in Genesis (actually there are two, but let’s leave that aside for now) and the seemingly endless discussion of how anyone can take them seriously in an age when science has revealed so much about the processes by which the world and we came to be as we are. I take it for granted that, whatever they are, those stories which open our Bible, are not claiming to be ‘scientific’ accounts of any sort, and that their purpose is something very different from that of explaining the processes of nature. So, for my



part, we can happily leave the scientists to tell us whatever, on properly scientific grounds, they have to tell us about how the world works and the probable history of its evolution. That has little to do with biblical notions of ‘creation’ as such, which are bound up instead wholly

with questions about why there is a cosmos at all, what sort of reality we should suppose lies behind its existence, how we should value it, and where it might be headed. And all this it talks about in terms of the purposes and actions of 'God, the Father Almighty' (or in the case of the Old Testament, Yahweh, the LORD). This God, already being known to Israel, and to Christian believers in Jesus, is the one, the doctrine of creation holds, whose character, purposes and promises set the wider context for whatever science may have to tell us, and to make some larger sense of it all. And the stories of Genesis 1-3 are poetic, picturing the world's beginnings in ways that lay this God's purposes and promises clear.

One interesting feature of the way these stories are told, though, has a particular theological point to make. If we ask the question 'Why did God create?', there are lots of things that can be said, and I have indicated some of those already. But one that is central to these stories and to the whole narrative of Scripture, but less than obvious at first blush, is the suggestion that God created so that his *glory* might fill the world, and we dwell in the midst of and enjoy and come to share in that glory. The glory of God, in the Old Testament, is the focus of God's presence, and is pictured in terms of fire and light and other forms of effulgence which are so remarkable that they threaten to dazzle, stun, overcome or even destroy mere mortals, who cannot bear the sight of God's glory directly. It is the material symbol of God's very reality and his presence in the world. It is holy and sacred, and it is



concentrated, for Israel, in the tabernacle and the temple, its 'throne' being the fabled Ark of the Covenant. And anyone who has seen the final few moments of 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' will be familiar with Hollywood's rendering of the dangers of exposure to it. But God longs to dwell in our midst, to share his life with our lives, to inhabit the world with us – to put his glory in its midst in such a way that it transforms our lives. And, various biblical scholars have noted, there is a clear literary parallelism between the way in which the creation narratives are structured, and the chapters in Exodus which give

instructions for the building not of the world, but of the tabernacle. They would take too long to recount here; but the parallelism is deliberate, and developed, and the suggestion is clear enough. God creates the world not as an afterthought, or to fill up time when there's little else to do, or as an experiment to see what will happen next. No, God creates the world as a temple, in the midst of which his glory will dwell in such a way that all will enjoy and be blessed rather than consumed by it. That's God's purpose in creating. To share his glory, and to make it the hallmark of his presence shot through the world. And, of course, it's what John picks up on in the Prologue to his gospel: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt (the verb can be translated 'tabernacled') among us ... and we have seen his glory...'. Another significant landmark in the gradual fulfilment of God's creative purposes.



The doctrine of creation has lots to tell us about God, therefore; but it also has things to tell us about ourselves and about the world in which we find ourselves. And some of them are things we need to hear loud and clear in our own generation and in the developed, western world.

First, our life itself is a gift from God, and not a right. And we should receive it as a gift, thankfully, and treat it with care and respect. That obviously goes for the lives of others too, especially those for whose lives we have some particular responsibility – our children, our aging parents, or whomever it might be. Those whose well-being depends on our behaviour and decisions. In a real sense, since we are each created within a network of biological and other sorts of relationships, their lives are a gift to us as well as to them, and our life a gift to them. We should neither take this gift for granted nor treat it lightly. Life (and human life in particular) used to be referred to as 'sacred,' which captures something of this idea of a gift that *matters to God* as well as *coming to us from God's hand*.

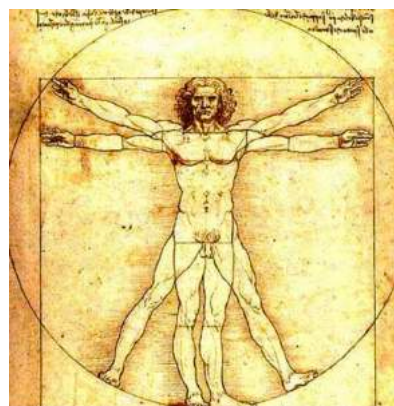
There is, in our secular, post-Christian culture an ever more vociferous insistence that our lives are ours to do with as we will, especially when it comes to taking control of how they will end. It's odd that the loss of belief in a God who has promised to sustain us through death seems to have made the process of *dying* itself



something to be feared, and something which people increasingly want to be able to control and make their own decisions about, as if it were just one more thing along with what hymns (or songs from the shows) will be sung at their funeral. But

knowing ourselves to be God's creatures involves the acknowledgment that we do not own ourselves or have any automatic right to determine such things. We belong to God, and our lives are in his hands. That must be the starting point for any consideration of the matter.

More generally, to know that we are God's creatures disabuses us of any supposition that we (personally, or humankind as a species) are at the centre of the cosmos. We are not the be all and end all even in our own lives, let alone in the wider pattern and history of the cosmos. And we are not and cannot finally be Lord of our own lives, though we may spend much of our lives trying to be. God does not just 'own' us (which is in some ways an unfortunate image), and did not just make us: God made us *for himself*, and our lives will never be properly adjusted to the world, and we will never really feel 'at home' in the world until we realize that, and re-orientate ourselves accordingly. That's not just something that is true in modern, secular, Godless societies. It was already true in the fourth century CE, when St Augustine wrote: 'You made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you'. It has always been true. We are restless, unable to find fulfilment or satisfaction of any permanent or deep sort. Modernity's answer to that is consumerism. But it doesn't work. It is just one more way of denying our creatureliness, and supposing that we are 'the centre



and the measure of all things, existing for ourselves,' and that is to be seriously out of touch with reality. Instead, as one writer puts it, 'God's gracious purpose for us is that we should sustain our true dignity as creatures meant to be conscious and intelligent witnesses of his work, created to know, glorify and enjoy him forever'.

What, then of the world, our natural environment, and the sentient creatures with whom we share it? Again, we might begin by recognising that, like life itself, the world and its fragile and beautiful ecosystems come to us as *gift* from God's hand,



but are not handed over to us to do with whatever we like or choose. The world in other words, is not *ours*. We do not *own* it. The world is given to us so that we may share it, with God and with other creatures whose habitat it is alongside us.

This is almost certainly the most important thing for us to hear and to take seriously in the current circumstance with its ecological crises and the shadow of irreversible climate change growing ever darker. But the rot goes a very long way back, and ironically received a significant shot in the arm at the dawn of modernity from the appropriation and misuse of biblical texts to provide theological warrant for an ideology of exploitation, consumption and the gratification of every conceivable human desire. The world became a warehouse of raw materials to be processed and sold on at a profit to the highest bidder. This consumerist attitude coincided with rapid growth in human understanding of nature and the ability to manipulate it courtesy of science and technology. How should such tools be used? Surely, a generation of philosophers and theologians argued, in whatever way seems to suit us best. After all, does not the Bible say that humans are made in God's image, and are to exercise dominion over the world? Well, that *is* what the Bible says, in Genesis 1:26 and 28. These are not the only relevant texts when it comes to reckoning with a biblical view of our

place within nature, but they are the ones that tend to have been concentrated on. And the question is, of course, not what do they *say*, but what do they *mean*?

At the time of the European Renaissance, this idea of a 'dominion mandate' given by God was fused together with ideas about human beings that drew their inspiration far more from classical Greek philosophy than from the Bible. Human beings, it was held, were essentially spiritual, godlike creatures, composed of material bodies and divine souls, and their essential 'godlikeness' lay in their capacity for reason. That, it was taken for granted, was what 'God created humankind in his image' in Genesis 1 meant. Notice, too, the implicit disparagement of material reality (anything lacking a 'rational soul') built into this idea. Armed with such views, theologians set about unpacking what it might mean for godlike, rational beings to 'exercise dominion over nature. God, it was

contended, had put humans in the world in order to make it their own, to use it as raw material for their experiments and industry, to expand their minds by pulling it apart to see how it



worked, all in the interest of sustaining and enhancing human knowledge and improving human quality of life, and without any necessary regard for the well-being (short- or long-term) of nature itself. After all, it was simply a material playground and warehouse of material bits and pieces, devoid of any 'spiritual' qualities, and of no lasting significance in the scheme of things. Humans, on the other hand were essentially spiritual beings who, while shackled for now to the clumsy processes of nature by their bodies, were clearly 'above' nature and free to use and abuse it as they saw fit. This ideology of hubris and liberal consumption may only have lasted for a few generations; but it put in place attitudes and patterns of practice which are still with us, and with some terrifying potentialities.

So, if the granting of 'dominion' to human beings in Genesis 1 is not theological grist to that ideological mill, how should we read it? First, we should notice that there is no suggestion in this passage or anywhere else in Scripture that human beings are in any way elevated 'above' nature. We are creatures, one species among many, and sharing with others a physical environment fitted for our and their survival and enjoyment. There is nothing in the biblical idea of being 'created in God's image and likeness' to suggest that we are 'essentially spiritual'. We have spirit, or soul (or call it what you will); but the idea that we *are* 'spirits' with a troubled but fortunately only temporary link to bodies has no basis whatever in the Bible. It is an import from Greek philosophy, and one that has been enormously unhelpful whenever it has reared its head in Christian theology. The only sense in which humans are 'set apart' in Genesis 1 is that God grants them a share in his 'dominion' over the world. And *God's* dominion, as we have already noted (his exercise of power) is that of care and concern for the wellbeing of his creatures, and to be granted a share in it is thus 1. To be given a huge responsibility for ensuring the good of both the animate and inanimate creation insofar as we are able, and 2. To be directly accountable to God himself, who does not disappear off the scene and leave us to 'get on with it on his behalf', but remains fully involved and wants, through our cooperative activity, to

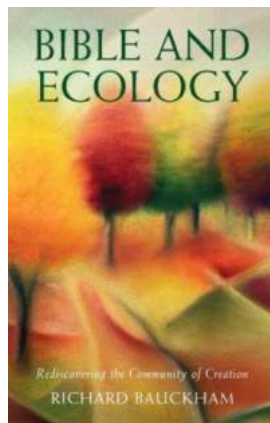


extend his loving 'rule' over all that he has made. And humans share in that 'rule' precisely *from within*, meshed into the networks of relationships that structure the world, and so having their own wellbeing bound up inextricably with its own. So, as well as a divine command (which is the flip-side of the so-called 'mandate') to

exercise *the sort of dominion* in the world that God himself would exercise if he were a human being, our own self-interest ought also to counsel against behaviour which inflicts terrible and needless damage on our created home.

In any case, this isolated text (Gen. 1:26, 28) needs to be set within a wider biblical context where other perspectives, too, are offered on our place as human creatures

within God's world. Richard Bauckham, in his book *The Bible and Ecology* (2010) does a first rate job of showing how, for example, Job Chapters 38-39 offer a sustained vision of animate and inanimate creation from God's point of view, and in which human beings are only fleetingly alluded to. The point of these speeches by God to



Job are to put him (and with him, us) firmly in our place, and to induce a form of 'cosmic humility' about just how little we humans are able to understand and to do where the patterns and processes of created life other than our own are concerned, and compared with God himself. Today, of course, it must be admitted that natural science has improved our understanding of things that, to Job, would have been wholly mysterious. But that improvement is comparatively superficial when considered

under the barrage of God's questioning in his chastening of Job. And, as one scientist puts it, 'Our awareness of our ignorance grows in parallel with, indeed faster than, the growth in our knowledge'. And another: 'The big surprises will be the answers to questions that we are not yet smart enough to ask'; and there is no basis for supposing that human minds will someday be able to understand everything. It is perfectly possible, in fact highly probable (why should we suppose otherwise?) that we shall finally run up against limits that our minds are inherently incapable of crossing. The point is not in any way to belittle or demean human understanding and its huge advances and capacities, but to set it in a bigger perspective, and to insist that, despite being made in the image of our Creator, we are certainly not God, and have no right to usurp divine prerogatives, though it would help a good deal if we reflected God's own 'Lordship' in our dealings with his world. We are not called to exercise God's power so much as to share God's delight and joy in what he has made.

