

Septuagesima 2021

So - the universe is millions years old. What has God been doing all this time? God is the creator. He is the reason why we exist. He's working his purpose out. He creates and re-creates. The prophet Jeremiah said that God is like a potter using his two hands to mould the ideal man and form him anew. St Paul followed this up by insisting that we must all let ourselves be created. The purpose of the Christian religion is to let ourselves be created again and again - to be continually recreated. To be part of the New Creation. That's what's happening in this final age. God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year.

But we complain, why does it all take so long? If God is almighty why does he take such ages about creation? According to the scientists people like you and me began seventy million years ago as some thing like a small squirrel, while untold millions of years ago we were something indescribable beginning to crawl up out of the slime of the sea. But why so slow? Indeed why does it take so long?

Well the doctrine of creation allows us to look from the inside as well as from the outside. I can ask why after 77 years God has not done a better job with me. Why am I so far from sanctity and perfection? And the answer is of course, at bottom its me who slows God's purposes down because I don't want to be perfect just yet - it would take too much effort. And God is extraordinarily patient. He lets us go at our own speed. He doesn't push us, he calls us. And in so far as we respond so the work of creation and continual recreation goes forward.

But nothing in this world stands still and in so far as we don't respond we go backwards, becoming spiritually displaced persons without hope in the world. We fall back into non-being. We disintegrate, we atrophy, we fall to pieces. If you look at the world from the outside its all plain to see in world history: the derelict people, the vanished civilizations, the extinct forms of life that have failed to respond and therefore uncreated themselves, sent themselves backward into nothing. And that's a hard saying.

But not so hard, for in his mercy our heavenly Father lets us see the world from the inside as well as the outside. And if we will only open our eyes we can see that here is more to God's world than geology and fossils and trilobites and dinosaurs. Creation is not just about the mighty things God did in the past but about the mighty movement of the transcendent within us. if you or I fall to bits, God does not shrug his shoulders with impatience and say "The weakest go to the world. Let's wash our hands of him and look for a better specimen."

No he has promised us glory: that we will be saints. and he will get us there if not in this age then in the next. And we are closer than we think. For His will is our peace. Our peace comes from doing his will. It is absurd to think that we were built not to cooperate with him. We walk hand in glove with him all the days of this troublous life. Christian liberty is deep within us all already. We cooperate more than we realize. Like diving into

the pool, theoretically you can choose to sink or swim. In practice the question doesn't arise. We all instinctively swim. That is the hand of God on you and on me, did we but know it.

Thus our liberty is a liberty to will our own happiness. And we consciously exercise this liberty by praying, by our bedside, by going to church and joining in the great prayers.

God will not be gainsaid. His purpose is not just to bestow grace, but to turn grace into glory. With infinite patience He picks up our broken pieces, shakes us free of that disgusting self pity and calls us by the spirit in our hearts to be men and women again. This is how God works. It is how he has always worked. And it's how he always will work. It is man who makes it all difficult, turns it all into a burden. It is God who makes all as natural as jumping into the water and swimming.

Let us pray...

O Lord support us all the day long of this troublous life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over and our work is done; Then Lord in thy mercy grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen