

I sincerely hope that you have not had personal cause to know about the uses of positron emission tomography. A PET scanner is used by oncologists and neurologists to see inside patients' brains and bodies. It is a brilliant tool for examining tumours, especially when used in conjunction with an MRI scanner. The positron which is so useful in scanning for tumours is also called an "anti electron" - or the stuff of antimatter. Positrons were 'discovered' in 1932. But their presence was first postulated in 1928 by a mathematician called Paul Dirac.

If you read about Dirac you'll find that his method of mathematical enquiry was much more that of an imaginative writer than a scientist. "His ideas," says one reviewer "came as intuitions. They were not derived from experimental observation, but from contemplation of pure mathematics. His discovery of antimatter followed this pattern. He deduced from his equations that if electrons exist, anti-electrons must exist also, though nobody had ever observed one... Most physicists greeted this with derision".

It is sometimes said that Christians exhibit a 'blind' faith: that we place our trust in something we cannot see and can never prove; that we are all about myth making and sloppy thinking. It's also said that our basic texts - the Bible and the early church - are soaked in primitive thinking which modern rational enquiry and the sophistication of science will show up for the low grade intelligence they must be. Well, I rather like it that one of the great scientific discoveries of our age, one which opened up a whole branch of science - quantum theory - started with an act of faith, a mathematical and artistic hunch - shaped of course by careful thinking. 'It must be', thought Dirac. And the proof, and the benefits, came later.

This Sunday the church celebrates Christ the King - Christ above all, and in all, the one in whom everything that is holds together. Here is the language of contemplation, and awe, of faith and hunch. Paul in Colossians offers us the aspirations and the boundaries of our belief about God and the world: the universe made by God through Christ; God revealed fully in Christ; the world finding its continued life in Christ; the world looking for final reconciliation and glory in Christ. These statements set our imagination and our academic and scientific faculties on fire. There is nothing in the universe, says Paul, which is outside the scope of Christ's creative power, sustaining love and reconciling sacrifice. Now go and discover how, and why, and what next.

What stretches the mind and the heart and the soul here is that this Kingship which we proclaim is severely tested by a careful look at the world in which we live, the world of which Christ is supposed to be King. In fact, all the evidence seems to be pointing the other way. There are typhoons and tsunamis, disease and earthquakes, plagues and epidemics. If Christ is meant to be King he has a funny way of showing it. What we believe and proclaim about God the creator, and Christ the redeemer, and the Holy Spirit the sustainer, what we declare about Christ the one through whom God brought and brings all things into being, seems to be actively disproved by a world where there is still disaster and devastation, and not all of it attributable to human wrongdoing either. We might have a Dirac-like faith that Christ's Kingship must be, but what we see day by day doesn't help our case.

Or does it? Reflect, if you can, on the choice of Gospel reading for Christ the King Sunday. It is the supreme moment of Jesus Christ's complete powerlessness. His Kingship is proclaimed twice in the Gospel narratives, and both times he is the least likely authority figure you can imagine. The infant, fragile Jesus is given gold fit for a king by the scientists of his age, the Magi. And Jesus is called king by one of the criminals being put to death alongside him – someone who recognises, in the most horrific of circumstances, that the Cross is actually a throne. 'Remember me when you come into your kingdom'. The point at which everything seems to have fallen apart, the moment of greatest weakness and defeat, is the moment when Christ's complete involvement in everything, even death, even nothingness itself, is proclaimed. God is in this. This is in God.

People who want answers about disasters – and I am one of them – will not be satisfied with this. Why the world is like this I do not know, and I would like to. But the contemplation of many greater minds and spirits than mine does chime in with my own praying and wondering: that it is God's intimate involvement and total identification with the world as it is which convinces me that God's love and grace is to be trusted. Jesus Christ is King of this life, this messy world, because he has been subject to its messiness and takes the whole thing into himself. There is no atom, not electron or positron of this universe which God does not inhabit, does not redeem, does not make whole.

This is the stuff of wonder. This is about worship and prayer and silence and exaltation. It is generally agreed that these five verses of Colossians Chapter 1 are words taken by Paul from a hymn, a creedal statement used in the worship of the earliest church, and as such they were perhaps already known to the Colossian church. The infinite complexity of the created order leads us to wonder and awe, and worship, using the best of our faculties. God's involvement in every aspect of that order is something to be taken by faith, to be encompassed in worship, to be explored with intelligence and diligence, and to be acted upon with courage. It is intimate and awe inspiring.

And belief in the God who inhabits every aspect of this creation, a belief that Christ is King and nothing is outside him, must also lead us to action and courage: to be there in the mess and the pain, to be swept up in the reconciliation and peacemaking for which Christ, the image of God, was revealed; to respect creation and to make peace where we can. Those who have convinced me of Christ the King have been those with most reason to disbelieve, those overwhelmed by their own disasters, yet who have found Christ with them when they had most reason to doubt. So we look, and wonder, and worry, and contemplate, and seek Christ in all things, until the day when what we cannot see will be made visible. Thanks be to God, who sustains our souls and feeds our minds and inspires our action, until that day when all things will be made whole in him. Amen.