

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them? *Psalm 8*

Ireland has produced more than its share of Nobel Prize winners. We think of recent winners of the Peace Prize, David Trimble and John Hume; Seamus Heaney winning the Prize for Literature. There is one we rarely hear spoken of, Ernest Walton, who along with Sir John Cockcroft won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1951 for their work leading to the first artificial splitting of the atom, laying the foundations for future particle accelerators.

Ernest Walton was Professor of Physics in Trinity when I went there in 1968. At that stage I had only just started going to Church and I loved Physics. Ernest Walton was himself a devout Methodist and a brilliant physicist who saw no contradiction between his profound Christian faith and his scientific endeavours.

I recall, early on in my time in Trinity hearing him one night in College Chapel. 'The art critic,' he said, studies the work of great human artists. The scientist studies the work of the greatest artist of all.' I recall that simple statement making a profound impact on me at the time. It is one I have often quoted when speaking of the apparent contradiction between science and faith to young people in school and confirmation classes.

Some years later I shared that memory with a colleague and he remarked: 'That is true; but we need to remember that we don't just worship an engineer, we

worship a person.’ These two fundamental truths are held together in words of one of my favourite Psalms, Psalm 8 that we heard earlier:

O Lord, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.

.....  
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It is a question that Paul addresses in his letter to the Colossians as he writes.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (*Col 1:15ff*)

We have this idea of creation, the whole of creation – earth, moon, star, plants, animals, humanity itself – finding its fulfilment in Christ. Christ there at the beginning of creation, present among us in the person of Jesus, living, teaching, healing, forgiving, dying and rising.

In the opening chapter of Genesis, God views all that he has made and, stage by stage, day by day, declares it to be very good.

Paul takes us even further. Christ not only present, Christ not only in whom and thorough whom all things are made, in whom all things hold together; he goes on to write:

and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

‘.....pleased to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven.’ Isaiah gives us a foretaste of God’s purposes of restoring harmony to creation:

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

.....

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.  
They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea. (*Isaiah 11:6 ff*)

Paul challenges us to recognise that all creation is sacred, all creation comes under the all embracing, reconciling love of God in Christ. This has fundamental implications for us in our Christian discipleship.

Creation, our stewardship and care for creation, our commitment to climate justice are not simply to be marginal, the concern of the enthusiast. This must be part of the witness of the whole Church, our response in life and worship to God’s love shown in the Cross of Christ.

We have been given this wonderful world in trust for future generations. It has been given to use but not to abuse. For it is nothing less than, in the words of Ernest Walton, ‘the work of the greatest artist of all’; before which I stand in awe and wonder.

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