

Westminster College

IMAGINE

God to Job

“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades? Can you loosen Orion’s belt? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth?”

(38:31-33)

IMAGINE

... a regular reflection from me as I journey with you in this adventure that is our life together at Westminster.

NEIL

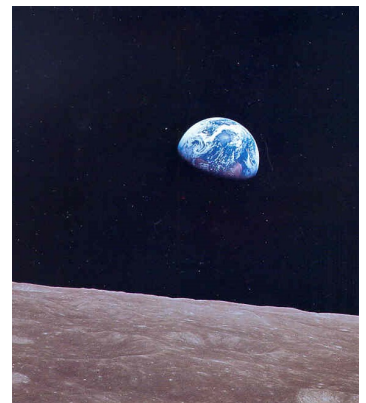
God of the Vast & Tiny

I’m writing this on the train home from a conference in Durham. An ecumenical group of us has spent three days learning from and sharing with cosmologists as part of a project connecting science and theology.

I’m left with plenty of awe at this realm of observation and mathematics; of theories being tested and theories for which no test yet exists. I’ve been offered ideas on Dark Energy (25% of the content of the universe, made up of extraordinary particles rather than atoms, and responsible for most of the universe’s gravity). I’ve encountered Dark Energy (75% of the content of the universe and responsible for speeding up the universe’s expansion - when all the previous theories predicted that expansion would slow, stop or reverse). They’re both “dark”

because we can discover their effects, but can’t detect them. I’ve watched a super computer simulation suggesting how these two shape an invisible web of structure across the universe within which stars get born and galaxies hold together. I’ve looked at the list of 3,412 planets detected orbiting other stars since 1998, and seen the smudge of red pixels which is a Hubble Space Telescope image of GN z 11 - at 400 million years after the Big Bang (13.8 billion years ago) the oldest stars we’ve ever seen. Awesome seems a reasonable word to use.

And the theology? We delved into Colossians 1:15-20, exploring the Bible’s consistent picture of God’s creative purposes and the New Testament emphasis upon Christ at creation’s centre. We gained a deeper appreciation



of God’s creative generosity; of creation’s super abundance and of its elegance at the level of it’s most impossibly big and most impossibly small.

Often science and religion are pitched against each other - for one to be right the other must be wrong. But these few days have deepened my appreciation of the insights science, especially cosmology, offers in ways that enhance and affirm faith. And the cosmologists wanted to discover more of how faith shaped us; the dialogue was real.

We’re Out - Now What?

The Friday after the referendum we gathered all the college staff. Some feared for their futures. We talked about their continued welcome at Westminster, and the uncertainty the vote brings.

Brexit shows us deep divisions across our nations, generations,

communities, and in our visions. So now to work. We’ll pray for wisdom for those who will have to navigate our exit. We’ll need to work to foster community, love, compassion, goodness, truth and hospitality amidst fear, anger and a rise in hate crimes and abuse. If ever we needed a

reminder of why God calls us to be salt, light, yeast and mustard seeds we have it now.

