

Dreaming of God

William Loader

“I’m the king of the castle. You’re the dirty rascal.”

The children’s cries echoed in my sleepy head as I dosed. Their voices were soon lost in sounds no longer articulate, a merging of memories gently losing me from consciousness into rest.

When morning broke, I had a vivid sense of dreaming. The path to reality was leaving behind the conversations I had heard. Can one ever dream of God? The details I do not remember, but the conversation? It was a real as when I am talking to you now. It went something like this.

God was in conversation with two senior angels and expressed a high level of frustration. There was no room for me to state caveats and corrections about such an image of God. Of course, it was my imagination, an image of God thrown up by my fallibility. Why was God frustrated?

“I created these human beings. I am very fond of them. I love them, but they don’t believe me!”

“You meant they don’t believe in you?” commented one of the angels.

“No. They believe in me alright, but I have a constant battle. I keep telling them I love them and they keep telling me they do not deserve it and are unworthy. I don’t think they are unworthy. It’s not about deserving things. I love them because of who they are. I wish they would stop telling me all the time that they are unworthy. Surely I should be free to decide that!”

“But, don’t you see, they think you are like one of their rulers, one of their kings. For generations they had kings who were very powerful and wanted the adoration and adulation of their subjects. You’d have to make a special case to be deemed worthy of their attention and favour. They think you must be like that, too.”

“No, no! How could they get it so wrong?! Wanting to be surrounded by people who keep praising you and saying great things about you – that’s what people do who have deep inner needs. Such people need help. They, especially, need help, even therapy. They make the world centre around themselves. They want all the attention for themselves. They’re a real problem.”

“But haven’t you noticed that they often say and sing things that make it sound like that is also what you want: to be the centre of the universe with everyone worshipping you? And don’t you deserve it?” The angel was very observant.

“No, that’s not me. What drives me is not a needy ego like that. What drives me is I want to see things grow. I want to create, to love, to heal, to help. Why can’t they believe me?”

“They try. In their royal courts you could approach a king and if you got his attention he might also help you. Kings were busy with themselves, so you needed to make an effort. You prayed that the



A creeper grown up to cover a street light

king might help you. That's why people feel they need to pray to you. They think you, too, are mainly too busy with yourself the way kings are." The angel made a good point.

"But I don't need to be persuaded to love. I'm not self-obsessed like them. I'm not a megalomaniac. Why won't they understand? I know people use the language of prayer when they address me, but that's best when I sense they are sharing their concerns. As I was saying before, I don't need persuading to care. Loving and caring is what I do and who I am."

"There's another aspect. They have laws and rules. Punishment is part of that. Some of them can't believe that you would simply forgive wrongdoing when people own up to it. There has to be punishment. That's why, they say, you felt the need to punish your son by letting him be crucified. Only then once the punishment was carried out, could you feel free to forgive." The angel was touching a sore point.

"But that's preposterous. Kill my own son? What sort of a monster do they think I am! Do they think I can't just decide to love and forgive? The best of them still call me the merciful and compassionate one. I'm not tied up in rules like that. I forgive because I love. No one needs to buy me off. Who do they think I am? Surely, they wouldn't treat their own children like that."

"They lived for generations with rulers who cared only occasionally and were mostly occupied with holding onto wealth and power. Generosity was rare. When they turned to honour you, they copied what happened in courts. Dignity and standing were important for kings. They had to avoid losing face. Generosity was often seen as weakness."

"So they made me in their own image? I see."

"They do speak about your love, but it is usually seen as you making an exception to the way you usually are, such as the way kings would sometimes do so. They praise you for doing so. Your presence in Jesus they see as an act of humiliation, a generous stooping down for a limited time, an act of love."

"The love embodied in Jesus and in his forebears was not me being different. I was not stooping down, as though I prefer to be on high surrounded by admirers. That was me being me. I'm always like that. Why must they treat loving as something exceptional?"

"When Jesus rose from the dead, many saw that as the end of your exceptional behaviour. He would now go back to sit on a throne beside you, crowned especially because of that exceptional act. It reinforced the sense that Jesus was an exception in your life and not the way you usually are."

"I can see that. It's all wrong. The resurrection event was my way of saying: yes! This is the way I am – always! It was not reversing what he did. So, yes, I know they now think about him like that, too: a person obsessed with wanting people to worship him. How do we undo this? The notion that he went about Galilee recruiting admirers is absurd. The notion that I then wanted him to set up the church to be a recruiting organisation to get me more praise and adulation is even more absurd. Thank goodness they don't all see it that way."

"But you are recruiting, aren't you?"

"Of course! I am recruiting people to join me in creativity and love. And who's this here?"

He turned and looked toward me. "Yes," I said. "Yes!" "Yes!" A vivid dream.

My wife, like an angel, turned to me and said: "So what was that all about?" and I told her.