

So many rights: the right to define yourself in almost every way; the right to self-identify your culture, your gender, your history; the right to 'speak your truth', the right to absolutely and totally claim ownership of your own body, the right to practically everything – except, apparently, the freedom to disagree with any of it. All these rights - and not a single mention of 'responsibility'. Responsibility brings people together, because responsibility is always shared; but rights divide people, because they are 'my rights', nobody else's. We cannot disagree without being called 'phobic' and a hater of whatever it is we disagree with. But I'm not phobic about anything or anyone; I certainly don't hate anything or anyone. It doesn't particularly matter to me how people want to 'define' themselves because that's not my business; but it does matter to me that I'm not allowed to disagree. I do care about not being allowed to have my own opinion.

This is increasingly true about materialism. Science, which deals in 'facts' is the only truth we're permitted to value. Any faith or belief or philosophy that reaches beyond the merely material is mocked and derided as childish, superstitious and deluded. Christianity is the easiest to mock – nobody makes jokes about Islam, because they know that if they did, their home would be fire-bombed within a week. Instead of the saints we have 'celebrities' – young people want to imitate them, to be like them; and instead of teachers and spiritual guides we have 'influencers'. Yet in the world at large, materialists

are in a small minority: everywhere else, except in a few totalitarian states and, sadly, in modern Europe, people look beyond the material towards the transcendent, the divine. It doesn't matter what you call it or how you understand it – it can't be understood anyway – because it contains, but is infinitely greater, than material existence.

To know this is the essence of wisdom, a wisdom that is ancient and which is personified in the first reading as a female figure and as five of the bridesmaids in the gospel. In Latin it is also feminine: *Santa Sophia* or, in Greek, *Hagia Sophia*. This is what the great Byzantine church in Constantinople was called: *Hagia Sophia*. Now, of course, it is a famous mosque in Istanbul. God's wisdom in feminine is texture... and it is sorely needed these days, before our narcissistic little western society is drowned by the tsunami of its 'rights'.