

## Our Trinitarian Faith

Many people dismiss the Trinity as impractical or irrelevant. In so doing they miss the essential nature of God – three persons in one. Human attempts to explain the logic of one plus one plus one equalling one invariably fail. Resorting to models and analogies are equally reductionist. However, as Anselm of Canterbury reminded us in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, the mystery of theology is a matter of faith seeking understanding, we believe in order to understand. As such we turn to Scripture with a teachable mind in order to fathom the mystery of the Trinity. When we allow Scripture to speak for itself, we catch glimpses of the Trinity in the O.T. not simply as an expression of ‘the plurality of majesty’ or the ‘royal we’; but the Triune God conferring with himself in the creation of mankind (Gen 1:26) and the call of Isaiah (Isa 6:8) to name but two incidents.

Reading the O.T. in isolation from the N.T., particularly Deut 6:4 “Hear O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one”, hardly offers explicit revelation of the Trinity. However, we read the Old Testament through the lens of the New. As Augustine of Hippo put it, the O.T. is the Trinity concealed, the N.T. is the Trinity revealed. Like switching on a light in a darkened room, the light simply reveals what is there; it doesn’t add to the contents. That is what the Holy Spirit does for us, by way of progressive revelation.

The most explicit teaching about the Trinity is undoubtedly Paul’s benediction “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all” (2 Cor 13:14). That said, we will restrict ourselves to three seminal events in the life of Jesus which highlight the nature of the Trinity viz his baptism, transfiguration and the first apostolic mission.

- i. The Baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21,22)  
All three persons of the Trinity are present: God the Son praying, God the Holy Spirit descending from heaven and God the Father pronouncing his blessing. To the extent that the Spirit of Christ indwells the believer we too will experience the life of the Trinity and be affirmed by God’s affection and approval.
- ii. The Transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9:28-36)  
Momentarily the unveiled glory of Christ is revealed before the watching eyes of three disciples. Peter’s attempt to capture the passing moment by way of a memorial is a woeful failure. However, having learned his lesson well he reminds us in his second letter (2 Pet 1:16-19) that we have something more than their monetary experience, viz the enduring testimony of Scripture and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.
- iii. The First Apostolic Mission (Luke 10:1-24)  
Like the disciples we are often tempted to seek our sense of identity and joy through our achievements. However, Jesus’ gentle rebuke is apposite, “do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (v20). This deep assurance of salvation is the fruit of the Trinity’s personal presence and power viz. salvation through the Son, adoption by the Father and witness thereto by the Holy Spirit. In short the persons and work of the Trinity are essential to our faith.

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