

Our Trinitarian Faith (Part Two)
The Trinity and the Christian Life
2 Cor 13:14

Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, dismissed the doctrine of the Trinity with the scathing words, "These metaphysical insanities hindered the growth of humanity and represented relapses into polytheism differing from paganism only by being more unintelligible. How can we talk about a triune God or the three in one without talking mathematical and metaphysical nonsense."

Granted, the Trinity is "the hardest thought the human mind can try and wrap itself around", in the words of JI Packer. He suggests that the mystery can only be resolved through relying on God's revelation in Scripture. We have noted that glimpses of the Trinity in the O.T. are more than mere 'plurality of majesty', the 'royal we' as in the creation of mankind (Gen 1:26) and the call of Isaiah (Isa 6:8). Moreover, the enigmatic appearance of three visitors to Abraham confirming the birth of a promised heir in Gen 18:1 ff is also suggestive of the Trinity.

The N.T. is explicit about the Trinity. The three persons of the Trinity reside in the life of every Christian. Jesus reminds us that not only himself but also God the Father lives in us. "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and he will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23). Likewise the Son, "Remain in me, as I remain in you. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit" (John 15:4,5). Moreover our "bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19). He fills us (Acts 2:4), leads us (Rom 8:14) and helps us (Rom 8:26). In the words of Henry Scougal, the Christians is a quite extraordinary person, "the life of God in the soul of man".

The implications for us are quite astounding. The Trinity offers:

i. Security

We are guarded by the power of God (1 Pet 1:5). He is a shield (Ps 84:11), a mighty fortress (Ps 32:7) and we are safe because our "lives are now hidden with Christ in God". (Col 3:3)

ii. Power

Isaiah reminds us that those who wait upon the Lord, will "run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa 40:29-31). Our inherent gifts and strengths, our temperaments and personalities are not the measure of our potential. Rather the Trinity dwelling within us is the true measure of our true potential before God.

iii. Presence

We can never escape from the presence of God (Ps 139:7-12). This is both a comfort and a challenge, since we cannot ask God to turn his back while we sin, because our bodies are his temple.

iv. Adoption

As sons and daughters of God we come to share in the very relationship with God which Jesus enjoys. The way we become his children may well differ: Jesus is God's son by nature, begotten not created. We become God's children by grace. But the relationship is essentially the same. We have the same inheritance (Rom 8:17). We are loved with the same love (John 17:26). When God adopts us he also transforms us so that on the great day we will be totally Christlike (Phil 1:6). What a glorious prospect!

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