

Column

Examining a young man preparing for ordination, a Bishop asked, “What’s wrong with Unitarianism (a belief which denies the three-fold nature of the Godhead). Without pausing for an answer, the senior cleric continued, “It’s too simple.”

A good answer to be sure! That Mystery we call God stretches the measure of our minds. There are things about God we can understand, while there are others that we can only understand partially or perhaps not at all.

The great thing, according to the Judeo-Christian tradition, is that the God masked in mystery delights in revealing Himself. To Moses at the burning bush, for example, He revealed Himself as the great I AM. He is not just the highest among beings but the ground of all being, to echo the 20th century theologian Paul Tillich.

God’s self-revelation continues as the biblical narrative unfolds. Not only is He revealed as the creator and sustainer of all things, but also as the God who prefers one type of behaviour over another. “The righteous LORD loveth righteousness” (Psalm 11:7).

But for Christians, the great climax in the story comes with Jesus Christ. He puts a human face on the invisible God as no one in all history. The writer of Hebrews puts it like this: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2)

The story becomes more complex still. At the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, He speaks of Someone like Himself whom the Father will send in His name. Called the Comforter, this divine person will bring God’s power down to God’s people and extend and expand Jesus’ work.

So, you end up with not one, or two, but three what would later be called ‘persons’. Nevertheless, the early followers of Jesus refused to give up the Hebraic belief in one God.

How this seeming conundrum could be explained, however, had to be hammered out on the anvil of Christian experience over the course of several centuries. A new vocabulary had to be developed to describe it. Nevertheless, the embryo was there from the beginning.

Indeed, if the doctrine of the Trinity did not exist, something like it would have to be invented to make sense of all the Scriptures say on the subject. It's not simple, but necessary.

The doctrine of the Trinity, though, is more than the stuff of which creeds and confessions of faith are made. It is a springboard for right worship.

We human beings are invited to be taken up into the divine life of the three-Person God . . . to join in the 'dance' of love that eternally goes on between Father, Son and Spirit.

June 7 is Trinity Sunday in this year's calendar. Go ahead, take off your mask and let your praise go viral! Sing: "Praise God from whom all blessing flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!" (Thomas Ken).

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; We beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

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