

## 252 One God in Trinity

One of life's great ironies today is that, from daily news bulletins concerning all that is going on around us, you would never know that God even exists. For all sorts of reasons deemed sound and sensible, God has been virtually eradicated from public debate, which goes a long way towards explaining the moral shambles we see within contemporary society. One terrible example of this is the current "celebration" of the 1967 Abortion Act, an Act which carries responsibility for over nine million abortions in the United Kingdom, (to which must be added the innumerable "surplus embryos" being destroyed in IVF clinics). Truly as with murdered Abel, the blood of these little ones must cry out to the Lord from the ground (Genesis 4.10).

But of course God does exist – making Himself known to us all within the Holy Bible as God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the one true God whose very nature is as the "Three in One". As the Athanasian Creed puts it (in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), "At Morning Prayer") – "we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Substance" – surely the most succinct description we have of trying to explain the unexplainable.

Now while "God as Trinity" remains beyond our limited powers of understanding, we have no excuse for turning away on the grounds that "it's all too complicated, it's only words, and it doesn't really matter anyway". It very much does matter! Quite apart from anything else, a sound belief in the Trinity preserves biblical orthodoxy, for we find that the falsehoods found in the non-Christian faiths and sub-Christian cults existing today always spring from their overt or subtle rejection of the Trinity.

This means that our studying the Christian creeds - the Apostles' Creed (Ap), found in the BCP Morning and Evening Prayer, the Nicene Creed (Nic), found in the BCP Holy Communion Service, and the Athanasian Creed mentioned above (Ath) - is time well spent, even though such study may go against the more casual ethos found in many churches today. In giving us a reliable distillation of biblical truth, these creeds keep us well-grounded in the core beliefs of the Christian Faith.

We can start by giving "the headlines" concerning each member of the Trinity, comparing the content of the three creeds just described.

We turn first to God the Father - "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth" (Ap), "Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible ..." (Nic), "made of none, neither created, nor begotten" (Ath).

Then to the Lord Jesus Christ – "his (that is, the Father's) only Son our Lord" (Ap), "one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds ..." (Nic), "The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten" (Ath).

And then to the Holy Spirit – “the Holy Ghost” (Ap), “... the Lord and giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son (Nic), “of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding” (Ath).

In summary we gather straightaway that: God the Father, the Creator, just IS! – as in Exodus 3.14, “I AM THAT I AM”; His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, eternally springs forth from the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the whole comprising “the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity, to be worshipped” (Ath). Incomprehensible and wonderful, all at the same time!

Now critics will say, quite correctly, that the word “trinity” does not appear in the Bible, so this whole doctrine must be false, dreamt up long ago by clever theologians with nothing better to do on a wet afternoon. Nonsense, for we find that God’s very being, self-revealed as Trinity, is deeply embedded throughout Scripture.

One example we find is in Titus 3.5-6 – “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour (that is, the Father) toward man appeared ... according to his mercy he (the Father) saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he (the Father) shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour (the Son) ...”. The particular role of each member of the Trinity is beautifully described here.

Next week we plan to consider the lovely relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as revealed to us in John’s Gospel, with the implications for us in our own discipleship; followed later by how a simple diagram in our mind’s eye of the workings of the Trinity – in which we also appear! – can be very helpful in our own prayer lives.

Meanwhile – “Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost”.

A hearty Amen to that.

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