

## 489 “All glory be ...”

We saw in last week's Reflection how Jesus' priority was and is, first and foremost, to keep in step with His Father, in the central, bullseye circle on that dartboard. After that, and arising from that, comes Jesus' concern for His Church and His people, in the next circle outwards on the dartboard as it were. Truly, God the Father comes first in Jesus' ministry, and, to quote from last time, “we come second”. Now this is a vital truth for us to hold on to these days, for it involves God as “Trinity”, and it keeps us, Christ's redeemed people by the Father's will, in our correct, still highly-privileged, place in relation to the Trinity.

“One God as Trinity” is no human concoction, but is simply the way God has revealed Himself to be throughout His Word: Article I of the Thirty Nine Articles in the Book of Common Prayer reads thus - “There is but one living and true God ... And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost”. This deep, beautiful Truth concerning the nature of Almighty God is beyond our understanding, but clearly requires our honouring of its workings as far as we are able to do so.

Now this is where things can go wrong in contemporary Christian worship and teaching! Forty years and more ago for example came the great wave of “the charismatic movement”, when the Holy Spirit became “top of the pops” within the Trinity as far as song writers and much preaching was concerned: the baptism of the Spirit, being filled with Spirit, spiritual gifts, especially tongues, spiritual fruit – all needing coverage no doubt, but too easily Jesus was given a secondary role, and the Father was often hardly mentioned.

In reaction Tom Smail, who had become a prominent figure in the charismatic movement, wrote a book, “The Forgotten Father”, to restore a balanced understanding of the roles of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Putting it simply, he reminded us that the Father is the Initiator, the Son is the Means or Channel, and the Holy Spirit is the energising Power: each has His place, each has His role, and each deserves His due amount of our attention.

In the workings of the Trinity for example, we see how the Holy Spirit points us to Jesus, how Jesus points us to the Father, and how the Father receives the glory that is rightfully His as our Creator and heavenly Father, and points us back to His Son and His Holy Spirit, giving them their own share of glory; (for instance, see “glory” and,

“glorify” references in your Concordance). There is thus an eternal loving harmony within the Godhead, with no Person of the Trinity behaving independently of the Others. Amazingly it is into this divine relationship that we are drawn, by the mercies planned by God the Father “before the foundation of the world”, and achieved for us in and by Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (eg., Ephesians 1.3-12).

These days a fair few local church fellowships adopt an informal, relaxed style of worship, which is particularly apparent in their use of modern songs. Some such songs are clearly scripturally sound and blessed and can stand the test of time; others are less so, with too much emphasis on just “me and Jesus” for instance, to the neglect of the Father and the Holy Spirit. In our use in worship of newer songs, as well as older hymns too, (for “old” does not necessarily mean “sound”), we do well to select a spread of items across which the Persons of the Trinity are given their due attention and praise.

Lastly we come to our prayers: who do we usually address in our prayers?? Apart from any brief, occasional prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus alone, our normal format of prayer is rightly addressed TO God the Father, THROUGH God the Son, and conveyed BY the Holy Spirit. Such a prayer format duly honours the Persons of the Trinity and their particular roles. If I pray only to Jesus I am ignoring the Father; and if I pray only to the Father without mentioning Jesus I am in effect bypassing His Son, who is the only Mediator by whom I am even able to speak to God as my Father (eg., John 14.6 / I Timothy 2.5-6). The prayers in the Prayer Book are worth another look, for virtually all of them are quite correctly addressed to God the Father “through Jesus Christ our Lord”.

As in the conventional Christian calendar we are now marking Christ's Ascension, followed by Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, with this year the Queen's Platinum Jubilee as an added extra, may our songs, hymns and prayers continue afresh in spirit and in truth with - “All glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen!”

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