Sermon for Trinity Sunday Year A

Readings: Psalm 8; Ephesians 1:13-23; Matthew 28:16-20.

Advantages of the Trinitarian God

So often we treat the Trinity as a problem –as something too philosophical and abstract to understand. Today I want to tackle it the opposite way and expound some of the BLESSINGS of having a Trinitarian God.

**We do not worship a Book, but the Living Word.**

No matter how holy we say the Holy Bible may be, no matter that we declare it the Word of God – we worship the Living Word, Jesus Christ. The Bible is only holy because it reveals to us the nature of God as revealed through OT times and supremely in Christ. It is not the words of the Book themselves that are intrinsically holy, but its subject-matter, since they are the testimonies of those to whom the revelation came, unfolding and deepening over the years until it found its culmination in the writings of those who had experienced Christ himself.

This gives Christians a “hermeneutical gap” between us and our holy book – the room to interpret, to understand the variety of its styles, the breadth of its experiences, the particularities of its histories, and the complexities of its cultures. We are also free to accept God speaks with people since the Bible was written. That hermeneutical gap – allows God to keep on talking to us and teaching us new things. The Bible is both the eternally true bedrock of our faith and the foundation stone upon which God can still build.

One of the major insights from the fifty years of ecumenical dialogue with the Catholic Church is the realisation that although the Bible is authoritative for establishing Christian belief, the Bible is itself a product of the tradition it steers and regulates.

So our Bible sets the parameters of our faith and helps us interpret the living relationship we have with the risen Lord, but it is not a chain that binds us forever in the past, unable to meet the challenges of each new generation. Neither is our faith so ethereal and New Age that ANYTHING can be called a spiritual revelation. Whilst we are not bound to every single word the NT manuscripts bequeath us, the Christian faith cannot be manipulated by the latest fashion to abandon wholesale major biblical principles. Therefore, for example, most of us would accept that women can speak in Church; but that does not give us leave to deny the divinity of Christ.

Our faith is fully focussed on Jesus of Nazareth. Nothing that does not fit with the life, words and principles of Jesus can be accepted as authentically a word from God. So a Christian suicide bomber would be a contradiction in terms.

**Our God is both far and near – just as we need him to be.**

God is near to us in Christ who became one of us, making the invisible God visible, tangible and intelligible to us. God mercifully takes the form of one of us to speak to us face to face.

God the Holy Spirit, however, is nearer still. Jesus was historically of one place and time and as a human being had to come to be born among us, live with us and die like us. But God the Holy Spirit allows God to be nearer than our own breath, for God now lives in each and every one of us who proclaims Jesus as Lord. God speaks to you and me. God is always personal and always close wherever we go and whatever happens to us.

Yet God is also usefully distant at the same time as he is near us. God the Father remains infinite mystery, the God who cannot be worked out and circumscribed by historians, sociologists, psychologists, politicians or theologians – all of whom have had their go at explaining away Jesus of Nazareth and the experience we call God the Holy Spirit. God the Father remains the ungraspable depth of infinite being. Jesus makes God known. Knowing is not the same as understanding everything.

**A Trinitarian God gives us a faith that is not a status we acquire, but a journey we follow.**

Faith is not just about believing the correct things about God and Jesus Christ in the Creeds; it is not knowing chapter and verse of the Bible; it is not just about observing certain rituals like baptism and holy communion, or keeping a set of rules like Wesley used to have for his followers; it is about a journey of discovery and inner spiritual transformation. This is the work of God the Holy Spirit. It is not just the Eastern religions that talk about inner enlightenment. We Christians sing from the same page.

**A Trinitarian God can talk to other religions too.**

With a Trinitarian God we Christians are enabled to be generous with our God. We do not have to keep him for only ourselves. God the Holy Spirit can talk to others and so other religions in our eyes do have an authentic encounter with God. They too possess true spiritual treasures, and they may have things they can offer to us. As Christians we would say that without God the Son, Jesus Christ, no full understanding of God’s nature is possible. Some of the more liberal Christians would find that too ungenerous; but I say our Trinitarian God enables Christians to be far more generous with our God than some others are towards us with theirs.

**A Trinitarian God is able to speak inside and outside the Church.**

The work of the Holy Spirit extends to all people of the earth. Human conscience knows the very basic moral code with which all humans can resonate: *Do unto others as you would they do unto you* – this is a gift of the Spirit that lifts us above the level of the animal kingdom.

God the Holy Spirit can be at work in the world without taking anything away from the fullness of Christ who is found in the Church. God is therefore able to speak to non-Christians too and people of no religious faith. This means that Christians don’t need to impose theocracy upon the world because we acknowledge God is already at work in the world beyond the Church. It also means that God can speak to the Church through the world. Some would say that God is talking to the Church through the world in matters of ecology and sustainability, acceptance of gay people or women’s rights in the same way as God spoke to the Church centuries ago through Bruno, Galileo and Copernicus.

**A Trinitarian God reveals the whole truth of human and divine natures.**

Jesus on the Cross reveals the full horror and unacceptability of sin. The Cross does not allow us to gloss over our failures with psychological, sociological or historical relativism, but forces us to face up to what we truly are – whilst also revealing the true depth of divine love and mercy that comes to our aid.

The Good News of the Cross is that sin matters – and that is important. When you read of innocent people being killed, robbed, abused, imprisoned, tortured, raped or enslaved, it is very definitely Good News to realise that God does not find such suffering to be of no consequence. Human suffering caused through the wickedness of the human heart is too serious for God to airily wave an almighty hand and declare it of no real importance. The cross declares sin is unacceptable to God.

In the face of real wickedness that is Good News; in the face of our own sinful short comings it is sobering. But the Cross of our Trinitarian God allows God to be both Judge and Redeemer. And we need both.

**Biblical foundations**

It is true that the Trinitarian Doctrine evolved over the first three Christian centuries – but it is firmly rooted in the Bible and is itself part of that journey of truth upon which our living Trinitarian God has led and continues to lead his people.

Each generation sees the Christian story in a new light, discovers new depths, experiences fresh delights and suffers the doubts of their contemporaries, but we remain true to those who went before us, true to the nature of our Living God and true to the needs of our own souls, when we remain faithful to the infinite profundity of our Trinitarian faith.

**Rev Dr Trevor Hoggard**

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