



## The Triune God

A Pastoral Letter to the Teulu Asaph from Bishop Gregory  
Thursday, 25th June, 2020

**H**uman beings find it very hard to contemplate infinity. We are so finite ourselves, living in a little corner of the world, aware that our lives are bounded by circumstance and mortality – especially at this time. Everything we know also speaks to us of the finite. How many miles is it to our destination? How many hours will it take to do this? How much did that cost? Yet when we come to God, we have to talk about infinity. We can read or even write a thousand volumes of theology, and the truth is that we have only captured the merest edges of his eternity. All the language that we use for God – every word – is an attempt to give shape to someone who is beyond boundaries. Our words are incomplete, any description is unfinished; it can only ever be a thesis, an insight, an analogy. As that beautiful hymn says: “Thou art a sea without a shore, a sun without a sphere”.

Christians believe that we can begin to talk about God meaningfully though, for one reason – because of revelation. God has revealed himself, and told us something of himself. “No man can see my face and live” Moses was told (*Exodus 33.20*), and that remains true of the totality of God’s being, but God, we believe, has revealed himself in the Word, and the Word subsists in two ways for us – in the Word of God himself, Jesus Christ, and in the “authorised version”, the record of that revelation, which is the Bible. Maybe that’s a topic for another pastoral letter ...

Sometimes the idea of infinity gets so much, that we tempted to reject it. “If God created the world”, asks the school child, “who created God?” “If God is omnipotent, why does he allow coronavirus?” Yet infinity is real. We only have to go out and look at the sky at night to realise that our own universe appears to be infinite, so that we cannot see its end, and even our most powerful telescopes haven’t plumbed its depths. Believer or non-believer, Christian, Muslim, or atheist, we can all ponder the question: just where did it all come from? Cutting edge scientists tell that that question of what happened before the big bang is illegitimate, that there can be no “before” when there is no space-time, that nothing preceded the quantum fluctuation which started it all.

Christians however give a far more intriguing answer, that before the universe there was the three in one, the triune - one God, but a trinity of persons, dancing in life and love; that at the bottom of the bottomless well of the universe, is relationship and love; Creator, Word and Spirit. Why are humans so caught up with relationships? Why are friends and lovers just so important to us? The Darwinian says because of the impulse to survive, but what gave the universe that drive towards life in the first place? I want to say that all life is sacred because all life springs from love, the love of God who calls forth creation to himself – the heart calling upon the heart, as I put it in an earlier letter.

If this is right, if the nature of God as Trinity means that the fundamental truth about the universe is love and relationship, then all love is sacred – not the sort of love that demands selfish satisfaction, but the true love that sacrifices self, that nurtures, that heals, sustains and gives growth. It means that eternal significance rests not on what endures for the longest or the greatest, a triumphant human civilisation or the longest living star, but the quality of love that any human life can generate. “Beloved, let us then love one another, because love comes from God” (*1 John 4.7*)

A new bishop recently made her motto: Amor Vincit Omnia, Love conquers everything. “For I am convinced”, wrote the apostle Paul, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (*Romans 8.38,39*)

The trinity is a conundrum that none of us will ever solve, this side of eternity at least, but this teaching about God does school us to delight in love, the love which binds together the Trinity, which is revealed in God’s love for us, and in such love as we have for one another.

If anything can conquer coronavirus, it is love. If anything renews our strength and hope, it is love. If anything can make a difference, it will be grounded in love. That is what God’s revelation of himself teaches us, and it gives us an agenda for tomorrow and today.