

We may think we are standing outside the ‘physics’ of God, outside the theoretical construct of the Trinity. We may think that in this privileged position of objective observation we can discern the workings of God from afar and sum it up in some neat formula but, as Christians, and indeed, as human beings, we are already in the ‘engine room’ as Rowan Williams once put it, caught up in ‘the fire in the equations’ as he also said quoting Kitty Ferguson.

We are right there with Moses on the mountain top and with Nicodemus and Jesus, and caught up in ‘the thick of things’ in the eternal life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul may not have been expressing a full doctrine of the Trinity in his final words to the Corinthians but he too understood the fierce nature of our intimacy with God and God’s willingness to temper this with a gentle love, mediated through the grace of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. God so loves the world that we are caught up in this fire but may experience it as a balm, or a gentle breeze, or as a baptism or immersion in a sea that upholds us. Nicodemus hasn’t quite got there yet and disappears from view until the fierce nature of this relationship reappears in the passion and death of this man Jesus, born – or rather, begotten – ‘from above’. Like the other disciples, we can surmise that he too is tested by fire and purified by it; so too *our* engagement with the Trinity grows. God comes to us as a babe in a manger and lives with us in every way that we are except without sin. This loving presence presents us with a choice, a responsibility: to live as if God, or as if love, exists – or not. To those who embrace this possibility, life in Christ becomes everything, ‘a spring welling up to eternal life.’ This is life in the Spirit, not a separate category from life in Christ or life in God, but all part of the one dynamic of Trinitarian love, the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And its nature is necessarily turbulent at times, and puzzling. The whole of creation speaks of this, for it’s a life essentially lived for others or, in the words of Rowan Williams once again:

Love is given so that love may be born and given in return. That is the engine of the universe...

And if we want to live in this truth, to live in reality, to live by the Spirit who is breathed out from the Father and the Word, this has to be our life.

(p.27 Choose Life)

Our consolation, our balm, when ‘bad things happen to good people’ is to know that there is a deeper reality at work which culminates in resurrection.

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