

7th June 2020

Threes

**“Today, I put on a terrible strength invoking the Trinity,
confessing the Three with faith in the One as I face my Maker.”**

St Patrick, from St Patrick’s Breastplate

I’m not sure whether I’m a Trinitarian or not, but I stopped worrying about it years ago. On the day which is designated as Trinity Sunday, when the Christian Church traditionally remembers the “three-in-one” of the Godhead, it’s enough for me to know that I find the divine in different ways.

I know God as creator, in thankfulness for the wonders of my world; I see God through Jesus, as I give myself to the purposes laid out for me to fulfil; and I feel God in the mystery of a holy and comforting presence, beyond words or definition. A three-in-one God? As I say, I’ve just stopped worrying about it.

Doing or describing things in “threes” is familiar to us – from St Paul’s, “Three things last forever, Faith, Hope and Love”, to Caesar’s affirmation of empire-building, *Veni, vidi vici*, “I came, I saw, I conquered”; from the three Magi, to the traditional three movements in a symphony; from Dumas’ *The Three Musketeers*, to Abraham Lincoln’s, “Government of the people, by the people, for the people” – the use of “threes” had a rounded, tidy symmetry to it.

And yet ... might “threes” not be too limiting sometimes? Is a symphony the worse for having four or five movements? Are three musketeers diminished when D’Artagnan is added to the mix? Would Paul’s hymn to love be watered down if he’d also emphasised the importance of Peace and Joy? So why should we be limited to an understanding of the divine by only three dimensions?

St Patrick said he was *confessing the Three with faith in the One*. Surely it is “faith in the one” that matters to us too, so that we don’t limit our God at all on Trinity Sunday, or at any other time.

A prayer for today

God, who is beyond words and definition, you reveal yourself to me as you choose.

*Help me to open my eyes, and mind, and heart – all three –
to the revelations of your love and purpose for my life. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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