

## Holy Spirit: Trinity Team Player

I've been given the title "Holy Spirit, Trinity Team Player". In a moment I'll read the accompanying scripture, but just to say that the ideas I'm presenting here have come from a mix of sources including Debbie, my wife and from reading Rowen William's book on CS Lewis' Narnia stories.

Reading from John 16 v 12 to 15:

*<sup>12</sup> "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup> But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."*

Now these are not simple verses and I'm expecting only to use them to make some very basic observations about the Trinity. I'm also going to explore a little one possible application of the Holy Spirit's role in leading us into truth.

Let's turn first to the Trinity.

[Show slide]

- Very simple picture, to illustrate that Christians think of God as having three persons in one being.
- The persons can be thought of and spoken about separately but they share a connection of identity which makes them one.
- Now, as you can appreciate, that actually makes little logical sense and this difficulty has led to various problems as Christians have struggle to unravel and agree about the mysterious trinity.

And as I read these few verses, I must admit, I am a bit stumped. I can kind of see there are deep things there, but it like glimpsing the tip of an iceberg.

We read that “all that belongs to the Father is mine”, so, in some sense, there is a shared ownership of the divine attributes between Father and Son. Father and Son share ALL things, they have all things in common.

And the Spirit speaks only what He hears. He doesn't speak on His own, separate behalf. The Trinity speaks through the Spirit, and so there is a sharing of communication, a unity or agreement of communication, a sharing of self expression across the persons of the Trinity.

Also the Spirit glorifies the Son. So here is a connection between Spirit and Son; the one glorifies the other, Spirit bringing Glory to Son.

But just as the person's seem distinct, just as we see some sign of separateness, the Trinity again becomes one, for the spirit's words glorify the son because it comes from the Son (spirit receives from the Son), and remember everything the Son has is shared with the Father.

One reason perhaps this is such a difficult passage is that it is expressing both sides of a coin at once; it is describing the unity and the diversity of the Trinity at the same time.

It is a wonder to me that verses as difficult as these are in the Bible at all. Surely, we could say, it would be better to have no mysterious complicated stuff and just have the simple moral teaching. Why muddle it all up with this deep and dark stuff? Well, I think at the most basic level, we must simply yield to the wisdom of God; He chose to put it here and that is reason enough for us to read and ponder it. But perhaps also, it is necessary that the scripture is deep enough that even the finest of human minds cannot exhaust it.

And the bible is about God; Perhaps it should come as no surprise that it contains a few things which are harder to grasp. We can hardly expect God to be containable in our minds; He could not possibly fit in our minds and it is important that we don't ever think we have figured all of God out.

Back to the Trinity, and there are other places in scripture which speak of the Father and Son's relationship. In Hebrews 1 we read: *“The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being”* - the exact imprint. The word representation is “Charax” which means “Engraver” and is related to our word “character”.

So the Son is the image, the perfect characteristic likeness of the Father, a perfect, flawless representation of the Father. A mirror image.

This has led some Christians to think of the Trinity like this:-

The Father, has perfect knowledge of all things. He therefore has perfect self-knowledge. And as He eternally contemplates himself or has awareness of Himself, so that divine awareness takes form and reality; it is the Son.

The Son is the radiance of the Father, the emitted glory of the Father's self-awareness.

And these two, father and Son, as they see each other, also respond to each other. There is, for want of a better phrase, something between them. They have a union of love, and that love-relationship is expressed; it proceeds from them, and thus the Holy Spirit exists. The Holy Spirit lives with, is eternally with with the Father and Son, one with them, all three in an endless, ecstatic, joyous, unity of love and creative energy.

Notice how the words seem to creak under the weight of the ideas they are trying to express? I think we can little of the Trinity that is strictly 'true' since it will always be inadequate, but perhaps sometimes the attempt can be a form of worship, and therefore valuable.

And our ponderings have conveniently brought us to the question of image. And in particular, self-image.

The Spirit, in this passage is revealed as the Spirit of truth. Spirit of Truth. So what the Spirit does, any genuine work of the Spirit will involve a journey into deeper, or clearer truth.

Remember v12 of our passage *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear"*.

This implies that the work of the spirit, in revealing truth, is ongoing. It is not a static, one off past event but an ongoing and dynamic process. The disciples are not ready for everything, and neither are we. The Holy Spirit is taking us deeper into truth as we can bear.

Now, just as God is self aware, so are we. We are made in His image (that word again) and we too can form a picture of ourselves. We have consciousness.

[the actual vs image venn diagram]

- this is common from psychology textbooks
- gap between images is the discrepancy between image and reality

Since we are fallen, this self-image can go wrong, and indeed, I believe it does go wrong all the time. Our picture of ourselves is distorted and unreal. Our self image is, to some extent, untrue. Unlike God's perfect self-image in the Son, our self image is corrupted.

Now, this diagram is a little academic maybe, so lets have a little fun and bring things down to earth.

[nesbitt vs poldark slide]

- A bit of an extreme example maybe...

Now, there are many examples in literature where problems with self image get people into trouble. I'll show you a couple of those.

[Point out Narcissus slide by Caravaggio]

- Fell in love with his own image and died by drowning or suicide. Had no eyes for others. No one was good enough.

This is one example of how self image can go wrong. I suspect we all have a tendency to secretly idolise ourselves. There is a little Narcissus lurking in all of us. It is part of the pride that has infected all of us as part and parcel of our fallen nature. But that wrong type of self love, a self love that shuns others and isolates us, makes us think we are better, makes us daydream about our own attributes and achievements, is poisonous. If it goes unchecked and is allowed to grow, it will be the death of us, for we will fall into a bottomless well of self absorption. It has been speculated that Hell is simply "self, foully united with self; nothing with nothing" and that is a chilling, but vital warning of the dangers of self-idolisation.

In CS Lewis' "Voyage of the Dawn Treader", there is another example of what happens when self image goes wrong. It occurs when Lucy, who is normally portrayed with courage and devotion to Aslan, is leafing through a book of spells.

[Point out Lucy slide]

Lucy has a very pretty older Sister, Susan, and Lucy secretly, and understandably, feels a little jealous of Susan.

She comes across one spell that promises to make her "beautiful beyond the lot of mortals". She scrutinises the page, imagining more and more dramatic adventures caused by her beauty and also imagining Susan, 'plainer and with a nasty expression'. She imagines Susan feeling jealous of her beauty (a rather delicious role-reversal for Lucy), but in her fantasy world, Susan is now insignificant (no-one wants to be her friend anymore) and nothing she does can prevent Lucy being adored and admired. But at the last moment the image of Aslan emerges from the page and she hastily turns onwards.

In the recent film, this is taken a stage further; Lucy sees herself endowed with Susan's beauty; she is entranced and ecstatic with joy. But shortly, she recoils in horror, as she realises that she has become Susan and Lucy no longer exists - her dream has become so powerful and enticing that it has destroyed reality. She has wished herself out of existence.

And this is the triumph of the lie, the delusion, the false image over reality; it leads to distortion and eventually destruction of reality. If Lucy is obliterated from the story then Narnia will be left undiscovered. In a world without Lucy, Aslan will remain undiscovered to the others. In a world without Lucy, who can say how much will be lost?

But again there is something of that desire to have others' attributes or gifts in all of us. We are all susceptible to be jealous of others. That is part of the rejection of or dissatisfaction with ourselves that we inherit through the fall. And that can lead us into trouble; it can lead us into trying to imitate another person. It can lead us far away from our true shape and far away from our purposes in God. Notice that this is the opposite error to Narcissus; he was too taken with

himself, but Lucy wasn't satisfied with herself - two opposite problems of self-image. But both hugely destructive.

All delusions are harmful; there is no such thing as a harmless lie. We carry delusions about ourselves, false ideas, grandiose ideas and ideas of worthlessness, or inferiority. Lucy tried to reject the truth, and Aslan allowed her to do so. Lucy was humble enough to turn away from them. What Aslan offered her was the truth, nothing more. He didn't magically transform her into a raving beauty so that she could feel alright again. He brought her back to the truth.

In another place, Aslan commends Lucy for her bravery. She feels she has let Him down by not being brave enough, but He says; "If you were any more brave, you would be a lion". This is an astonishing validation of Lucy, and I find it a deeply touching remark. But notice again, she cannot be other than she is; for this is, of course, to become someone else. And this is not Lucy's choice and it is not our choice, for Aslan, God, is our creator. He chooses our form and attributes and He chooses them with a wisdom that we need to trust. Lucy is not as pretty as her sister and that is that. And so, of course with us.

So let me summarise the key points again.

- 1/ The Trinity is a mystery, but worth returning to from time to time
- 2/ Our self image is corrupted and this can lead to problems
- 3/ The Holy Spirit helps us by guiding us into the truth including the truth about ourselves