

TRINITY OF HOPE



Scripture:

Psalm 8

¹O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens. ²Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.
³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;
⁴what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?
⁵Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, ⁷all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
⁹O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



TRINITY OF HOPE

This passage is featured on the lectionary for Trinity Sunday because it mentions God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit all in one paragraph. But there is no mention of the term “Trinity” in all the Bible. So why is the concept of God as “Trinity” celebrated every year? Let’s look at where the term came from, how it is reflected in the scientific understanding of the physics of Quantum Entanglement, and how it relates to the rest of this passage about suffering.

The Trinity is a term created by Tertullian in the third century to explain the character of God. Tertullian was one of our early church fathers.

TERTULLIAN

Since it is Father’s Day and Trinity Sunday, it is a good day to get to know Tertullian. (Tertullian is one of the “early” church fathers when Latin and Western theology and doctrine were being developed. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox are considered the Reformed Protestant Church fathers who shaped and formed our current understanding of protestant theology and doctrine.)

Tertullian was a writer, orator and theologian who originated new theological concepts and advanced the development of early Church doctrine. He is perhaps most famous for being the first writer in Latin known to use the term Trinity. He produced an extensive amount of Latin Christian theological literature.

Tertullian was born in the year 155. Many famous people back then went by single names like Beyoncé and Cher do these days. His full name was Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus.

Tertullian, for short, was raised in Carthage, Tunisia, North Africa. He was the son of a wealthy Roman centurion who provided him with an education emphasizing Roman law. As a result, his writings are full of legal analogies.

Tertullian was very prolific. He wrote thirty-five plus Christian treatises and his ideas still influence our theological thinking today. (We had to read his Apologetics at Princeton.)

The doctrinal works Tertullian published influenced Cyprian, the teacher of Augustine, who is credited as the founder of Latin theology which had a big influence on our western theology.

TERTULLIAN DID NOT GET SAINTHOOD

Even with his amazing imprint on church history and western theological thought, Tertullian did not get sainthood in the Roman church due to some controversial beliefs that the Roman church could not agree with.

- #1. He did not believe widows should re-marry.
- #2. He believed those persecuted for their faith should not flee but be martyred for it.
- #3. His explanation of how the Trinity worked conflicted with the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in western theology.

Rather than viewing the Triune God as having three equal parts, Tertullian believed that even though God is three in one, he believed that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to the “Father” God. Yet, later in his life he became a Montanist, believing that the Holy Spirit was still revealing new prophecies, especially apocalyptic prophecies, and he also felt called by the Holy Spirit to live a strict ascetic life in his later years.

Tertullian’s ideas inspired the Council of Constantinople to meet in 381. There they did not agree with his theology on the Trinity and affirmed that the Father and the Son were of the same substance including the Holy Spirit. This is where the Nicene Creed was developed and it remains historically the only ecumenical creed accepted as authoritative by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and major Protestant churches.

THREE IN ONE

Gregory of Nyssa also affirmed that the Holy Spirit was of the same substance as God and the

Son, and Augustine developed the thought that the three in one Triune God represents three persons who are relational and yet one divine essence. Both Nyssa and Augustine received sainthood.

But maybe Tertullian was correct. Maybe the parts of our Triune God interact in ways we don't understand. Who really knows for sure?

Stanford's Encyclopedia of Philosophy says: "The bedrock of trinitarianism is a metaphysics of God as unique, simple and incomprehensible. It states: "We can't grasp all truths about God, or about God's essential nature. God is ineffable, indescribable, (such that no human concept applies literally to it)."

THE METAPHYSICS OF GOD

That is why some Protestant churches today don't celebrate Trinity Sunday. They think it is an artificial construct for understanding something that is beyond description.

This statement on the metaphysics of God as unique acknowledges that our faith involves metaphysics, which led me to wonder: How does the Trinity relate to quantum entanglement? The Trinity is thought of as a metaphysical concept which basically means it is "after or beyond physics," something beyond the "observable" physical matter. Topics of metaphysical investigation include existence, objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect, and possibility. (Probability.)

THE ENTANGLED TRINITY

I discovered there is a book titled: *The Entangled Trinity: Quantum Physics and Theology*. The author, Ernest Simmons, is a professor in Minnesota.

He starts out the book quoting Colossians 1:17: "Jesus Christ is before all things and in him all things hold together." That sounds like dark matter doesn't it?

Dr. Simmons says the doctrine of the Trinity is "an exercise in wonder." It is drawn from the wonder of our own existence and the diverse experiences of the divine encountered by the early Christian community.

Simmons says that the Trinitarian mystery is a dynamic divine relationship of perichoresis, which (according to the theopedia) is a Greek term used to describe the triune relationship between each person of the Godhead. It can be thought of as co-indwelling. An image often used to express this idea is that of a "community of being." Simmons' thesis proposes that "perichoresis evolves within the trinitarian life of God as entangled superposition, relating creator and creation in mutual interaction, supporting a pantheistic model of God."

You are all dying to read this book now aren't you!

A pantheistic model of God is the view that everything in the universe is part of an all-encompassing, immanent God who is pervading, permeating and sustaining the universe. This perspective promotes a divine unity of the world.

Quantum entanglement is a physical phenomenon that occurs when pairs or groups of particles are generated, interact, or share spatial proximity such that the quantum state of each particle cannot be described independently of the state of the others, even when the particles are separated by a large distance.

Entangled superposition is: two (or more) quantum states can be added together ("superposed") and the result will be another larger quantum state.

This reminds me of the quote attributed to Aristotle that says:

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

Quantum entanglement has a relational perspective.

When people work together as a team, they produce something greater than if they worked on it individually.

[That must be why Presbyterians believe in committee work!

Two brains are better than one.]

HOW DO YOU SEE GOD AND THE TRINITY?

All this information is given to inspire you to seriously ponder how you yourself see God and the Trinity. Does it matter to you?

Question proposed from the last part of this passage: How does your perspective on the Trinity affect your understanding of suffering and why God allows it to exist? Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Is that a good enough reason for suffering so we can endure and have a stronger character that is hopeful? What if we don't endure it? What if we succumb to the suffering? Does suffering inspire us to be relational as the Trinity role-models relating in community with one another? The Word is meant to inspire questions for your life.

ROMANS 5

Look at the context in Romans 5. Paul is addressing the new Christian community in Rome that is about to suffer persecution for their faith in Jesus. And thank God, many of them endured the suffering. If they had not, we would not have the concept of the Trinity. Tertullian is one who survived the persecution of Christians and his long, educated life gave him the opportunity to develop the Trinitarian philosophy of God. For Tertullian, suffering produced endurance, character, and hope.

He once said, "Hope is patience with the lamp lit."

So, may you have that kind of patience in your life. May your patience with yourself and others light a lamp of hope for all to see and wonder and believe. Amen.

Benediction:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit be with you now and
forevermore. Amen**



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