

A Divine Committee?

Isaiah 6¹⁻⁸; Psalm 29; Romans 8¹²⁻¹⁷; John 3¹⁻¹⁷

*Whom shall I send?
[Isaiah 6⁸]*

Would it surprise any of you to know that I really do dislike committees? No discussion should take place unless you know the content and no vote should ever be taken unless you are confident of the result?

On this Trinity Sunday I think I want to caution against any understand of God that sees the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as a Divine committee working together and an in tension for the good of how God is perceived.

Just have a look at what Isaiah records of his conversation with God:

- ✦ The scene is set for this Theophany - it is the traditional image of God enthroned in power, surrounded by six-winged Seraphs in a place where God's very presence makes it so that **the pivots on the thresholds shook** in a space filled **with smoke** from the incense that always represents the prayers of the people in Scripture and the deafening hymn of heaven: **Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.**
- ✦ What confuses Isaiah is that he has seen God and has not died: his response is to say: **Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips...yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.**
- ✦ God takes the initiative in searing the sin and then Isaiah has a challenge.
- ✦ God doesn't conceded authority when there is a job to be done: **whom shall I send** isn't delegation by abdication - God's authority continues in and through the task. Isaiah doesn't have the freedom to go where he wants and say what he wants because God's authority contains and controls what he does. (**Who will go for us** is a reference to the community that is God - already in the Hebrew Scriptures 'we' rather than 'I'.)

The Psalmist continues the theme of the total majesty of God - **in his temple all cry, 'Glory'**.

[Paul is explaining to us the effects of Pentecost - **if [you live] by the Spirit of God you are children of God.**

- ✦ God doesn't exercise power to make us what we should be - it is a positive statement of authority: **it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.**
- ✦ **Glory** is found in suffering not beyond it.]

The passage from John may be among the best-known of any in the Gospel's - if any verse from the Bible is tattooed on our memories it is, **For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.**

Our focus is on the authority of God revealed in this passage:

- ✦ Nicodemus made have made the mistake of trying to be secretive - **coming to Jesus by night** - or he may even have made the mistake of talking with Jesus as an equal: Nicodemus was part of the Sanhedrin, effectively, Jewish royalty. Jesus tells him he **must be born from above** (or **born again**). You can almost hear the laugh in his voice: **How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?**
- ✦ Jesus has already used the word **must** and now goes on to continue with the imperatives: **no one can enter the kingdom of God...; you must be born from above;** these are not notions for discussion or ideas to be developed - this is the authoritative word of God.
- ✦ All of this demonstrates God, Father, Son and Spirit working together - which is why we don't have to understand the Trinity but rather experience it!

The irony is that throughout the ages committees have met trying to come up with a simple and concise definition of the Trinity and have spectacularly failed - just read the Athanasian Creed as an example.

We don't need committees we need commitment! And that commitment has to be honest enough so that we don't fall into the trap of thinking we are doing God a favour. Nicodemus seems to think so and the **Here am I. Send me!** Often does too.