Trinity 18 2020. God as Truth

In the +Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In a short while, we’ll say our Statement of Belief … *We believe that God is love and power and truth and light* … it comes directly from Revelations, but also in a similar vein, Salman said … the Light of God, in life; Love and Power and Truth, and Peace. Salman was a messenger of Al-Lah … our Islamic brothers. So we have two or more religions supporting the concept … so it should be easy. Something like this *… I am the way and the truth and the life* should be pretty straight forward. Right ?

If we read the whole chapter of our Gospel reading today … John 14 … … which we should … we’ll see a range of contentious subjects … *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*. And elsewhere in John 10 vs 30 … *I and my Father are one*. And then later in chapter 14, in verse 16 … *And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you*. Verse 19 continues .. *Yet* *a little while and the world will see me no more, but ye see me, because I live, ye shall live also. At that day, ye shall know that I* ***am*** *in my Father, and ye in me, and me in you*.

Crikey there’s a lot in that. Heh friends … I’ve got a good idea … let’s start an argument ? Yep … Pythonesque if you wish. well OK Jonesy … what about ?

Well I think there’s enough meat in just those few passages we’ve read to keep a whole bunch of folk arguing for millennia. And guess what … they have.

This small group of texts, taken individually, is tough enough for our minds to comprehend … but that’s why I said you should read it all. John 14. Go on … make it your night time read tonight. And then … why stop there ?

In one fell swoop, Jesus has identified Himself as part of a triune godhead. Now you have to put yourself in the mind of the disciples … simple folk, Jewish folk. The old religions including the Jewish only knew one God. YHWH … Yahweh … as we know Him, remembering as we said last week … these ancient languages didn’t have active letters … we call them vowels … they are full of what we call consonants … and you get the privilege of putting vowels in yourself. Sure makes it hard to make any translation utterly authoritative. But it makes a great basis for an argument. C’mon … let’s have one eh ?

We need to step back here a minute and reflect on what I’ve just said …cos the Jews like so many other religions knew only one god. Of the three great Abrahamic religions, only Christianity sees a triune godhead. The other two, the Jewish and Islamic faiths … are monotheistic in focus.

Many religions worship a multitude of gods, and some even include a triune god. As an example, the Hindus see a triune god … have done for over five thousand years so it’s not a uniquely Christian concept … Brahma is the creator god in Hinduism. He is also known as Svayambhu which means self-born, that is … he always was, and is Vāgīśa (the Lord of Speech), and is the creator of the four Vedas, one from each of his mouths. Now think back to Revelations … remember our four living creatures that surround the throne ? Where did the concept of four speakers … four mouths … come from ?

Vishnu is the second of the gods in the Hindu pantheon and, along with Brahma and Shiva, is considered a member of the holy trinity (tri-murti) of Hinduism. Vishnu's role is to protect humans and to restore order to the world. His presence is found in every object and force in creation, and generally Hindus recognise him as the divine being from which all things come. Stop a moment and think … what is it we say in our creeds ? By Him were all things made ! Very Christ-like.

Shiva is the third god in the Hindu triumvirate, and is responsible for the destruction aspect … but with that comes rebuilding. So the Hindu triumvirate consists of three gods … persons of one god if you like … who are responsible for the creation, upkeep, destruction and rebuilding of the world.

With the third person, the Sanctifier, the rebuilder … does this all now sound somehow … familiar ?

Let’s look at how all this parallels our Christian faith … God the Father … often referred to as the Creator God; God the Son … the Redeemer, by whom all things were made, and God the Holy Spirit … the Sanctifier, the rebuilder. Brahma … the creator, who was before all time. Vishnu … protector or redeemer, and Shiva … the power spirit than can destroy … or save and remake. Very Holy Trinity-ish … isn’t ? Very triune god.

When one considers their development as a triune god concept nearer six thousand years ago, we can barely conceive that all, somewhat regenerated, is separated from us by a mere two thousand years.

So … are we sure we want an argument ? No one comes to the Father … except by me. This is taken by those of a fundamentalist view to say that only Christians are to be saved. Geez that’s one heck of a call. But it gets worse … cos such begs further questions … which mob of Christians will be saved ? As we noted a few weeks back, there’s some 330 mobs of us.

Here’s a personal story that illustrates this concept. I’m on my way into my parish church, to meet a priest who’s been teaching me the rubrics. I’m ten days away from ordination … so I think I should learn the rubrics, and he’s been teaching me this for a few months. The mobile rings, and blah de blah … after some questions from this very deeply Christian friend wondering about attending my ordination … I am asked some questions, and my answers don’t align with the narrowness of thought, and so we come to a final statement by the caller … David … you know we love you … but heaven’s just not going to be the same without you. True story.

And that my friends … is the outcome of thinking that the Bible must be taken literally. No one comes to the Father, but by me. They don’t understand that “by me” can mean … by Vishnu. No one comes to Brahma, but by me.

This ... is the truth that Christianity … or indeed any religion with tickets on itself … needs to deal with.

Cos if we don’t think this way, we need to ask ourselves a few more questions. You see … we Christians are brought up to believe a few things, and then to hold them as absolute truths:

1. First up … No one comes to the Father, except by me. That gives us Christians exclusive rights to eternal life. Yes ? Are we sure ? I think … yes … we each can achieve such a future … but we do it individually on our own journey … yet such does not mean a system of exclusivity based in those days around a yet-to-be-developed religion we later call Christianity itself based on a man … who died. We can all make it “home” … no matter how far we stray … and we need to get our heads around this … very sharpish … cos
2. We agree with the concept … but the concept is not to say that we must all believe in Jesus the man … who died … rather that we hold to Him as the purveyor of the Christ, the eternal cosmic spirit, the Redeemer, the one by whom all things were made … and then became the man …

this Jesus we know of … but it was and is he, who was and is and always will be … the Christ … and such was before the man, so all those who are not Christian in the sense by which you understand the term .. can reconcile yourself with the one being … Jesus the Man, God made man, and Jesus the Christ, the eternal cosmic Christ that pervades all the innermost corners of each of us … and

1. so in that, we can say this very clear statements of fact. Of serious truth … as is said … *In Him, there is no darkne*ss … John 1 v 5 … only light. Light and Truth are in the Jewish system, one and the same, and

So I think we can leave our argument there … cos in my time as a priest in the Christian faith, I want to dispel one untruth … and that’s this … that not only are all Christians “saved” … so too are each and every one of us, no matter our faith system, our formalised journey, or none, cos back then … we were all Jews. Which meant we were Gentiles. Unclean. Yet all of us … saved … because of the words of Jesus, the man, our Saviour, through His role as the Redeemer, he commented about the one sheep that got away … and he found that one. No one gets lost.

So from that, we know we will all make it home. No matter how far we stray.

And that’s His truth.

So now would you all please stand and join with me in saying …

And now to +God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed all honour, might, majesty, power and dominion, now henceforth and forever more. Amen.

Let’s now resume or service with the First Statement of Belief.