

053110 THE GREAT CHRISTIAN REVELATION

(The great Jewish insight is that there is but one God and God is one.
The great Christian insight reveals what that one God is like.)

Saint Patrick used the shamrock, one shamrock with three equal leaves, each being distinct, as an image for the Trinity. Saint Augustine used several analogies. One was that of thinking, the thought that issued from the thinking and the retaining of that thought which we call memory. One mind whether thinking or the thought produced or the thought remembered. Thinking is not the thought which in turn is not the memory. All issue from and constitute the mind. One mind. Three way or modes of being.

Richard of Saint Victor used marriage as an illustration. The person of the lover. The person of the beloved. And the spirit of the love that they share. The spirit of lover and beloved for each other. This spirit becomes so real, so abundant, so alive that it sometimes becomes a new life, a person, a child. And then the two who became one in matrimony are now three but the three persons are one. Three in one.

If you were to go back two thousand years before Christ, all over the world there were cultures and there were religions. There were gods and goddesses of all kinds in whom these people believed. Many of them. “My gods are better than your gods. My gods are stronger than your gods.” The great breakthrough from this multiplicity of gods and goddesses came with a nomadic herdsman named Abraham. There was just one God, Lord of all creation. This God communicated with Abraham. That’s what Abraham believed. That was the great revelation, the great insight into God that was the beginning of the Jewish faith. Abraham believed. There is one God. God is one. That is the heart of Judaism. It is also at the heart of Christianity and Islam. But the pagans around Abraham did not believe him. The Assyrians after him did not believe nor did the Egyptians nor did the Greeks nor did the Romans. But the Jews did for two thousand years.

But then, about two thousand years ago came a particular rabbi who not only taught that there is one God and that God is one but Jesus taught more. He taught that this very same God was his Father. “Anyone who has seen the Son has seen the Father.” “The Father and I are one.” “No one can come to the Father except through me.” Jesus does not say that no one can come to God except through him, only that no one can come to the realization that God is Father except in and through Jesus the only begotten Son. And no one can come into an intimate relationship with God as Father except in and through Jesus.

What that means is that in the heart of God is this relationship between Father and Son. We are invited into that intimate relationship. We are grafted onto Christ, baptized into Christ, invited into that relationship with the Father. We are adopted. This relationship between Father and Son has always been. It is thoroughly mutual. It is a loving relationship. It is characterized by authenticity and truth. It is life-giving unitive, spiritual, holy. Their mutual love is a holy love, a holy spirit, the Holy Spirit. Their Holy Spirit is as real and as personal as the Father is and as the Son is. Father, Son, Spirit. One God. Three persons. There was never a time when these three were not.

The great Jewish insight at the center of its faith is the unity of God. The great Christian insight has to do with what that God is like—now and from the beginning and for ever. The oneness of God is a dynamic oneness, personal, loving, life-creating. From the beginning and forever, God is family, a community of persons bound together by love. Now. And forever. Does it not make eminent sense for us as human beings to know this? I think so. I think it makes all the difference in the world.