

I once gave a talk about the Holy Trinity at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. It was well attended by the students of my Division - or, to put it another way, they were ordered to be there! All went well until the Q&A. Ali, one of the two muslims in attendance became very incensed, thinking that I was proclaiming three gods (in fact, it had been orchestrated by the Divisional OC, to see if I could handle it). A challenge nonetheless understandable: God as three personae is one of the most profound and difficult elements of Christian mainstream theology; little wonder adherents of other monotheistic faiths balk at it. So, now we're into Sundays After Trinity, a bit of mental struggle for you, too.

Although I tend to emphasise the Oneness/Unity of God, we should not lose our Christian distinctiveness of knowing a Triune God. Suffice it to say that if I have any chance of glimpsing a clear focus of God in this world, I need to see God the way I see the rest of the world: three dimensionally. But I've said this before. Perhaps there's yet another way of thinking on the God who is One in Three, Three in One.

A one persona God (God the Father) is not as easy to know as it appears and has given rise to all sorts of unresolvable arguments. Is God near or far, judge or defender, interested in me or not? Et cetera. This perception can also lead to narrowness in knowing God.

A dual personae God (Father and Son) is equally problematic but also has the effect of making God seem two-dimensional. In one direction this can lead to duality - and Christians do not do yin and yang - or at the other extreme a god of flatness (like some of our worship!).

God as Holy Trinity ("Father, Son, Holy Spirit" - you won't find the word Trinity in the Bible), however, not only gives us endless depth, not only gives us a chance to know God beyond the two dimensions of mere words or fatalism, but also validates the person of Jesus as both human and divine because the very Spirit of God dwells within him and through him to all of us who chose to accept God in God's entirety.

One God, three personae, none of whom are any less in necessity or relevance within God's self; none of whom are any less unified within God's self; none of whom are any less part of the God who has called us to know God. Called by God, that is, to bring from the height of the Father's authority, the breadth of Jesus's mission to the places where we are, the depth of the Spirit's divine and uniting love.

Or, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." (*2 Corinthians 13.13*)

I'm off for a lie-down now.