

THE TRINITY AT THE HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

All that comes into the world leaves the world. We look around us. We see our families, our friends, our lives. But this too will pass. Everything has a drop of death mixed in it, which we call time. All things come into existence and shortly thereafter pass out of existence. The world beats in a rhythm of life and death. Countless faces have come upon the earth and all of them are eventually forgotten. How many nations and civilizations have risen and fallen? How many people have roamed the earth whose names and faces have been swallowed up without a trace by the passage of time? We, too, will be forgotten. Our children may remember us. Even their children. And for the very few, their children's children. But how soon will we be forgotten! How soon will all that we are pass into non-existence. The passage of time is like a raging beast that consumes all without itself being consumed. Time is that gate above which it is written: "All shall enter, and none shall pass." Time is like the ocean shore. We are the waves that rise up and fall down as the ocean of time beats on the shoreline. Look in your veins. Hear your heart beat. With every beat, there is a pulsation of life, but also a movement towards death. We are but moments in time. A breath of air in the great lungs of life. Inhale and exhale, and our lives have passed. No sooner are we given life than it is demanded of us. We live in vulnerability and transience. We are creatures. And to be a creature means to live each day on borrowed breath. And we gaze around us. What can grant meaning to our lives? We extend our hands upwards and we seek something to satiate our desire for life, for truth, for eternity, *for a Love that never ends*.

Creation gropes and longs for its Creator. Humans have grasped towards the Absolute only through inklings. As we attempt to feel our way up to God, the weight of God's utter difference and transcendence falls upon us like the weight of the entire Ocean. And we are left in silence before our Creator. Our cries, our sufferings, our quest for meaning would shoot up at God like arrows towards the Sun. The Sun remains invulnerable and unaffected. And the arrows would fall back upon us, and only point towards our finitude and our helplessness. And we were left in silence. But God himself has pierced this veil of silence. The Absolute has emptied himself little by little, and has shared his *name*, making himself known as "I am who I am." He has made his glory dwell among us, and has shown his face – the face which alone gives eternal life. God *can* and *does* hear our cries and our sufferings! "I have heard the cries of my people," says the Lord. God has made himself known and has allowed himself to be called upon by us. God has freely elected the nation of Israel and has promised to save the world through her. He has entered into a covenant relationship with her, and through it, He has revealed himself. The Absolute, the Creator, has humbled himself to the point of calling a piece of his creation his beloved spouse. He has stirred in her heart the desire to love him, and to be faithful to him. And God, despite Israel's infidelities, has loved her as a faithful Spouse. Within the fleeting world of time, there has now been revealed for the first time a love that knows no end, an eternal love: God's love for his people.

The history of God's in-breaking into the world that begins with Abraham, through Moses and the people of Israel, to the prophets, in which he pierces our silence and calls us to intimacy with himself, culminates in Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God empties himself into the full depths of the earth and of human experience. God not only hears our suffering and our cries, *He bears them himself*. In Jesus Christ, the Abyss of Being has become a being in the world. The full power and majesty of the Sun has been poured into the flickering light of a small candle. The Ocean of Being has poured himself into the little drops of time. In one line, God became flesh in Jesus Christ and dwelt among us. In Jesus, God not only reveals himself as Israel's long-awaited Spouse, but he enters into an eternal marriage with human flesh in a degree of intimacy that Israel could never have imagined. It was for this wedding that God had intended

all of creation. God fashioned for himself a human heart—beating and vulnerable—and in it, he wed together heaven and earth. With the precious touch of a Spouse, he came to an Israelite woman, Mary, and proposed to her. She stood for all of creation and the history of Israel. And, being moved by God's spousal love for her, Mary freely accepted God's gift of his very life offered to her: "Let it be done unto me according to thy word!" With those words, the wedding ceremony was initiated. God knitted for himself a human heart with his own hands from her womb. Her blood—the living blood of all of creation, the blood of his precious nation, Israel—became God's own blood. In her womb, heaven and earth were wed together in the beating heart of Jesus. What we have here is *God's human heart*. Every beat of Jesus' human heart that pulsated life and death was now filled with the full depths of God's eternal love. His was a *human* heart, and so it knew the impulses and yearnings of human hearts, experienced in all the bitter joy and joyful bitterness which any human heart has ever tasted. But it was *God's* human heart, and so in it the Son of God took the whole world into himself, wedding it to himself, in the deepest intimacy possible.

All of creation is forever changed. No stone is left unturned. After the incarnation, every heart that beats touches God, because God has taken the human heart to himself. Every fleeting moment in time is now freighted with the full weight of eternity. God is in our midst. God has a face – a human face, Jesus Christ. Jesus opens up for us the inner life of God. He is God's own intimacy and inner life opened up to the world. It is as if God opened his eternal Heart, and he reached down with his two hands, and pulled the world into his Heart that beats in the eternal rhythm of the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Jesus, we do not meet an ambassador for God. He is not a messenger. He is not a prophet. He is not a wise man, a good teacher, an angel, an exalted creature, a middle-man of any sort. In Jesus, we find the intimacy of God's own inner life opened up to the world. When we look at the face of Christ, we are seeing the inner life of the God of Israel opened up to the world. It is as if the God of Israel has said:

"I have taken you, Israel, to be my beloved spouse. To love and to hold. And you have been unfaithful to me. But I will not forsake you. I will remain with you. I will love you, and through you, all of creation shall know of the depths of my love. I shall wed you to myself in the most intimate way. I shall become one of you. I, myself, shall become flesh, and shall take you into my very heart, into my very inner life, and shall share with you the intimacy of my own life. I shall no longer look down upon you as my servant, but I shall become a servant, in order that you may be called my friend."

When Jesus opens up for us God's inner life, it is at this point that we can see that God is a Trinity. Jesus reveals the God of Israel to be the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he reveals himself as the eternal Son sent by the Father to declare the Father's love for the world, and to invite all to share in the intimacy of their eternal communion. In Jesus Christ, the eternal life of the Trinity pierces human history. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection become the translation into worldly language of God's inner life of love. As humanity walked down the aisle to encounter its beloved Spouse, God unveiled himself in the person of Jesus Christ. And in this unveiling, God's interiority and inner life became fully revealed for us, and we have been called to share in God's own inner life. And this means that *from the position* of this intimacy with God in Christ, we must re-interpret the entire history of God's self-revelation. God's covenant with Israel, his manifestation of himself and the indwelling of his glory, are now seen as stages in which God progressively reveals his inner life leading up to the full sharing of his glory and love in Jesus Christ. And the intimacy that God shared with Israel through the covenant relation described in spousal terms is now surpassed in a degree of intimacy that is unimaginable. The

wedding to which we are called is not merely the joining together of creature and Creator, it is a sharing in the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is as if Jesus Christ says:

“I am your beloved Spouse, O Israel. I have promised to be faithful to you, to be your God, to be your faithful Spouse. You think that this is a marriage between you as creatures and me as your Creator. But you do not know the depths of my Father’s love! My Father was not alone before he created the world. My Father was not some isolated God who had to create something in order to love it. My Father, for all of eternity, has given his life for me. He has loved me. And I for all of eternity derive my being from my Father, who loves me. And I give my love back to my Father, and our love is so true, that we bring forth the Holy Spirit, as the bond of our love. My Father did not become *loving* when he first loved you. My Father did not need creation in order to love. My Father and I, and our Spirit, are the eternal exchange of love. We are the eternally intimate. We are the true meaning of marriage. We are the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we have loved you, O Israel, we were sharing a love with you that we have always had for all of eternity. A love that we *are*. A love that we share in our eternal communion. When I became flesh, I joined to myself all of creation! I was sent by the Father in order to proclaim the Father’s love for you and for the whole world. And I joined myself to all of creations and all humans by becoming human myself. I wed together heaven and earth in my own heart! The wedding to which I call you, my beloved ones, is not merely the love of Creator for his creatures. I call you to share in my Father’s eternal love for me. You shall share in our eternal intimacy. You shall share in our eternal marriage, in our eternal communion, in our eternal life of love.”

This is the wedding feast of the Lamb! It is not merely a wedding that takes place here on earth, between creature and Creator. It is the invitation through God’s gracious self-emptying in Jesus Christ to be wed to God *in order that* we may share in the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By becoming flesh God emptied himself and came down to our depths. But the effects of this were not that God was to be lowered, but that we were to be elevated. God lowered himself to take on a human heart, in order that our human hearts may be lifted up into his eternal Heart – the inner life of the Trinity.