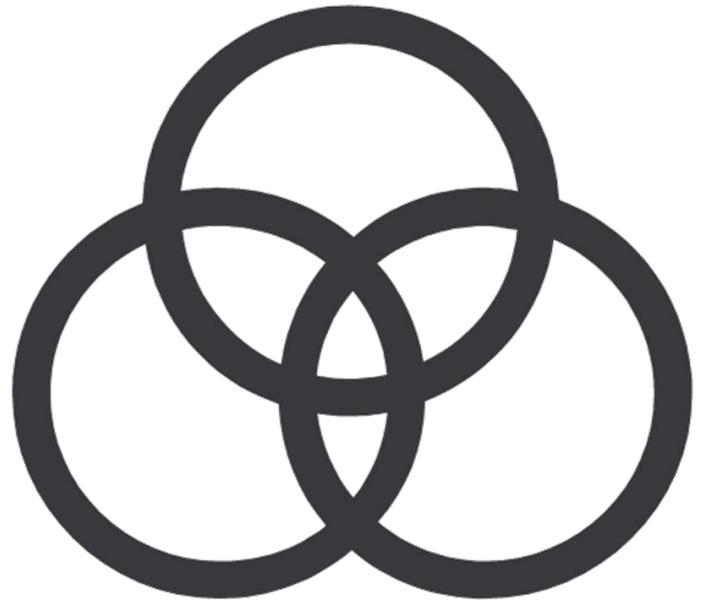


No. 16: Names and symbols

Have you seen this symbol in our church? It appears in at least 2 places, - if you can find any more please let me know! It is known as the Borromean Rings and represents the Holy Trinity.

A circle is an endless line, having no beginning and no end, which symbolises eternity or God. Three entwined circles represent the Trinity, with its three eternal and unified members.

According to the Athanasian Creed, we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity and so Borromean rings have been used to represent this idea. An association can be traced back to Saint Augustin of Hippo (354-430). He described how three gold rings could be three rings but of one substance. A now lost 13th century French manuscript described the word "unitas" at the intersection of all rings and the three syllables of "tri-ni-tas" distributed in the outer sectors.



In mathematics, the Borromean Rings consist of three topological circles which are linked and form a Brunnian link, so by removing any one ring results in none being linked.

During Lent, as a church we are reading the compelling and excellent book, King's Cross by Timothy Keller, which presents the story of the world in the life of Jesus, as told in Mark's gospel. In the first chapter, Keller writes of how, at Jesus' baptism, the spirit descended (or 'hovered') like a dove and a voice came from heaven "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" [Mark 1:11 NIV]

From this passage Keller points out the parallels with the creation story in Genesis where again the Spirit 'hovered' over the waters like a dove, and God spoke "Let there be light". In the opening of John's gospel we are reminded that as the word of God, Jesus was present in the beginning.

"Just as the original creation of the world was a project of the triune God, so the redemption of the world, the rescue and renewal of all things that [begun] with the arrival of the King, is also a project of the triune God" [1]

The unity of the Holy Trinity is described as a dance. As the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all glorify each other, they 'exalt each other, commune with each other and defer to one another harbouring the others at the centre of [their own] being. In constant movement of overture and acceptance, each person envelops and encircles the others, [so] God's interior life overflows with regard for others'. [2]

As they are centred adoringly on each other, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God is seen as being infinitely and profoundly happy. The Trinity is all about the deepest possible relationship of love. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are all invited to join in the dance. As Christians our lives should be centred on and orbit around God. God should be our first love and have the first call on our lives.

I can think of no better name for a church than the Holy Trinity. It would be an interesting research project to find out how churches names are chosen and why there are so many dedicated to the Holy Trinity. As to why our church is dedicated to the Holy Trinity, I am sorry to say I do not know, but have a couple of theories, both with some historical reasoning.

At the dissolution of the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII, the patronage of Huddersfield Parish Church passed from the Priory of St Oswald at Nostell. Listed as part of the assets appropriated were the:

*CHANTRY of the HOLY TRINITY, Huddersfield.
Richard Balkburn, Incumbent.*

The chantry received a rental income for lands of £4.13s 4d, and paid a tithe of 9/4 to the Prior of Nostell. [3]

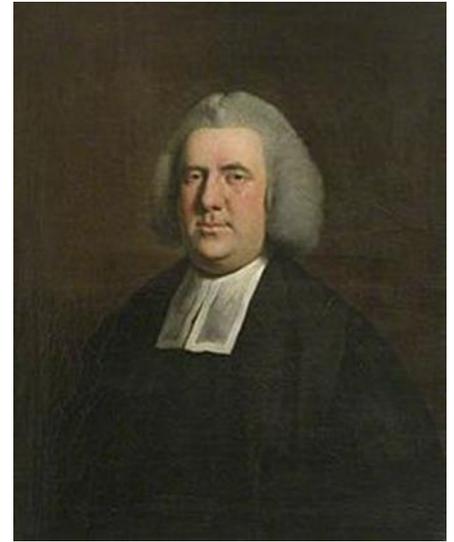
Chantry chapels were either buildings on private land or dedicated areas within a parish church or cathedral, set aside or built specifically for the saying of masses for the soul of a deceased person to speed them through the period of Purgatory to eternal rest in heaven. The chantry was a form of trust fund to employ a priest (or priests) to celebrate the masses, often on a daily basis.

Whether or not the Chantry of the Holy Trinity in Huddersfield was actually in the parish church or a separate building elsewhere I have not yet found out.



The painting above is of the chantry chapel to St Mary the Virgin on the medieval bridge over the River Calder in Wakefield in 1386. It was painted Philip Reinagle, in 1793. The chapel is the last remaining of 4 in the city and unusually, the building survived the reformation due to being part of the structure of the bridge.

So it might be that the locally historic church name Holy Trinity, was restored by Benjamin Haigh Allen when he chose to build our church. Alternatively it might be that he selected the name due to it being associated with the 'Clapham Sect', which formed around the Rev. John Venn, vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Clapham. John Venn was the son of Rev. Henry Venn (pictured right [4]), himself a forefront evangelical, who had been Vicar of Huddersfield and welcomed John Wesley to preach at the Parish Church. The strong evangelical teachings of the Clapham Sect were highly influential in the Church of England in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Membership of the group included the Yorkshire MP, William Wilberforce, who became a close friend of Allen, staying with him several times, and the theologian Rev Charles Simeon, Incumbent of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge.



Allen chose Rev Henry John Maddock to be the first minister at his church. Maddock had studied in Cambridge and attended Simeon's church there. Allen had to obtain a private act of Parliament to have his church built (58 Geo. III, Ch 45), in the act it states "it shall be called by the name of Trinity Church or Chapel in Huddersfield for ever." I tend to think it is for the association with the evangelical movement and its beliefs about the Trinity, that Allen chose the name Holy Trinity for his church in Huddersfield.

The Roman Catholic beliefs and teaching on purgatory can appear to negate the gospel teaching of grace and was one of the main reasons for the abolition of chantries under the protestant reformation.

In our Lent course this year, we have been reminded how we cannot earn forgiveness or God's love. His love for us is undeserved but freely given. God cannot love us any more than he does or any less than he does.

**"How great is God's love for all who worship him?
Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!
How far has the Lord taken our sins from us?
Further than the distance from east to west!" [Ps 103:11-12. CEV]**

In Chapter 4 of his book, Keller describes the importance of names and in particular the Hebrew name God calls himself – 'I am', a name thought to be too holy for the Israelites to say. We learnt more about this in our Exodus sermon series on Feb 25th in the story of Moses and the burning bush. Hear it here, if you missed it: <http://www.holytrinityhuddersfield.com/sermons/>

Jesus offended the Pharisees in his day by using the name 'I am' when he said of himself 'I am the Lord of the Sabbath'. Elsewhere he calls himself 'I am...' to describe the many other ways he is God.

By talking about Jesus as being Lord of the Sabbath, Keller outlines it is only by being fully into God we can fully rest, both in this life and the next. Nothing we can do can bring us closer to him because Christ's way is not about following religion and rules but about accepting his redemptive love and sharing in it, both in this life and the next.

May this Lenten period be a time of rest for us, a time to more fully appreciate the price paid on our behalf for that rest, and a time for us to be thankful that we are invited into that inner circle and eternal relationship of the Holy Trinity.

**Andy Barber
March '18**

[1] King's Cross (pub 2011, T. Keller,) p5

[2] C. Plantinga, as quoted in King's Cross (pub 2011, T. Keller,) p6

[3] Huddersfield – Its' History & Natural History, (pub 1868, C. Hopkirk) p255

[4] Painting of Henry Venn, 1770 by Mason Chamberlin the elder (Wikipedia)