

# Trinity Sunday 22 May 2016

[Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8 ; Romans 5: 1-5; John 16:12-15](#) from Vanderbilt

[Trinity C May 22, 2016](#) Textweek

Trinity Sunday doesn't rate very highly in the Christian calendar, and it seems almost insignificant when put alongside Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

Likewise the doctrine of the Trinity in the present day borders on irrelevant and/or archaic, especially as we are no longer fearful of being named and burnt as heretics.

If we're asked to explain the Trinity we all know the recital of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and can all summarise with One God in three persons, but if we're pushed into fine detail we'll all tie ourselves into heretical knots or lose interest and write it off as 'church doctrine' with a dismissive "so what" left unanswered.

But what if, this is the most important and significant key to fully understanding ourselves, the key to appreciating the very call of humanity and finding the reality of our relationship with God, and with all of creation: what if within this obscure piece of theological geometry lies the key to fuller expression of who we are, and a fuller understanding of everyone else, and everything else.

Let's digress for a moment and look at non-stick frying pans!

In 1938, 27 year old Dr. Plunkett and his assistant, Jack Rebok, had been assigned to work on synthesizing various new forms of refrigerant, trying to find a non-toxic alternative to those currently in use; and they were experimenting with one such potential alternative (TFE). Dr. Plunkett subsequently created around 100 pounds of TFE and stored the gas in small cylinders.

On April 6, 1938, upon opening the valve on one of the pressurized cylinders of TFE that had previously been frozen, nothing came out, even though by its weight, it seemed to still be full. Dr. Plunkett and Jack Rebok then decided to investigate further by cutting the cylinder open. Once they managed to get it open, they discovered that the TFE gas inside had polymerized into a waxy white powder, polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) resin.

Ever the scientist, Plunkett then proceeded to run tests on this new substance to see if it had any unique or useful properties. Four of the most important properties of this substance discovered were that it was extremely slippery (one of the slipperiest substances known to man), non-corrosive, chemically stable, and that it had an extremely high melting point. These properties were deemed interesting enough that the study of the substance was transferred to DuPont's Central Research Department and three years later, the process and name of

Teflon were patented and trademarked [Teflon was invented by accident](#) Today I Found Out

Today, as we cut open the cylinder of doctrine that holds the Trinity, we might also discover something that was never intentionally created, and something more than the early church theologians had sought to create.

Those early church fathers were looking for a refrigerant; they were trying to freeze into place one understanding of God as the Old Testament creator AND Jesus as God made flesh AND the fiery spirit of Pentecost as God with us; their chemistry was to take the literal texts of the scriptures, selectively, and blend them into a non-toxic alternative to the previous Jewish formula.

As we cut open the container of their chemical creation, we might see that the texts themselves appear very different to those perceived by the primitive chemists of old.

In today's gospel the writer captures the vision and the revelation of Jesus not as complete and finished; Jesus is not here claiming to be the one who has done it all for us, rather we see there is to be an ongoing continuity;

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth".

That teaching goes on to give us our Christ-like orientation

"All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

No longer is the creative force held in the hands of the Old Testament God, nor is it made flesh in the person of one man, rather all that is Jesus is to be found in us; an understanding that echoes what we heard in the Psalm.

I always think of today's Psalm as the only piece in the bible written by a Londoner; which is given away by the opening divine address;

"O Lord our Governor: how glorious is your name in all the earth!"

This is a glorious song of rejoicing in life's fullest truth;

"you have made us little less than gods: and have crowned us with glory and honour."

Why we wonder did not those early church chemists seek to refrigerate this perceptive insight,; were they so busy elevating Jesus so that he was above the church and at the same time keeping humanity in its place, in subjection to the Church.

"you have made us little less than gods: and have crowned us with glory and honour.<sup>7</sup> You have given us dominion over your handiwork: and have put all things in subjection beneath our feet",

this early insight was very much what Jesus revealed, God has not withheld, and all is given, *the word became flesh*.

Those early Church 'chemists' also completely missed the presence of Sophia, or wisdom, which is so beautifully distilled in the first reading;

"Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?" "I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race."

This is not the feminine aspect of God, it is much much more; gender is a biological quality that is used in the animal kingdom and related to reproductive performance; here we are looking at divine qualities, qualities that transcend gender distinctions, for love is the very life force of creation, it is the force of relationship that orients all toward one.

So as we cut open the cylinder of doctrine that holds the Trinity we will find no organs of gender in the Divine, we will discover love as something more; and so too we move beyond the primitive God of the Old Testament, the 'Father' of Israel, and we discover a divine embrace.

As become familiar with this new Trinitarian chemistry so we might begin to appreciate its potential; for it takes us back into familiar stories with a new sense of wonder;

The Trinitarian nativity of Mary, Joseph and the child in the Manger; Peter James and John as the Trinity of transfiguration, Rublev's trinity icon depicting the three angels that bring to birth the third person for Abraham and Sarah.

We look again at the Trinity of love found in the crucifixion:

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." [John 19:25]

and we'll read each and every text anew as we become familiar with the new chemistry.

Opening up the cylinder will also take us beyond into an embrace of other traditions, for we will encounter the Trikāya doctrine, a Buddhist teaching on both the nature of reality and the nature of Buddhahood; along with the three Jewels, the triple gems of Buddha, Dharma and Sanga, the enlightened nature, the teaching and the community that form the basis of Buddhist understanding.

We will overcome the rift with Islam so intent on singularity of God, which seems to be in contradiction with the old chemistry of the Trinity, and together hear that perhaps we have more in common than we have in difference.

We can also open our eyes to the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who are respectively the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe and maybe consider the parallels with our own narratives of dying and rising.

As we look again at what we thought was a doctrine frozen in time we might, like Dr. Plunkett and Jack Rebok, also discover something that is extremely slippery, non-corrosive, chemically stable, and that has an extremely high melting point.

We might discover something beyond our imagination, we might find that:

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.