

Column

'Whodunits' never seem to go out of style. Agatha Christie had her Miss Marple, Arthur Conan Doyle his Sherlock Holmes, G.K. Chesterton his Father Brown. All three writers, along with their characters, remain popular today.

In such works, plots are pretty routine. Poor Lord So-in-so's body is discovered in the rose garden. The murder weapon, a gardening tool, is found nearby in the grass. The task of the sleuth is to unveil the mystery. Invariably, this unveiling takes place at the very end of the story.

If 'mystery' is the mainstay of whodunits, so it is with the Bible. The word comes from the Greek and refers to something which previously has not been revealed which now has.

We find God carrying on this activity throughout the pages of the Old Testament. Perhaps the most notable example was when God reveals Himself to Moses as the great I AM (the self-existent one) at the burning bush.

This disclosure continues and intensifies in the New Testament. As in the days of Moses, this unveiling does not come about through the prowess of a human sleuth, a Miss Marple, but is the work of God Himself.

This divine activity reaches its pinnacle with the coming of Jesus. He puts a human face on the invisible God as no one in all history. What we human beings could not know through our own searching, God has revealed to us. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," (1 Timothy 3:16).

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity (God is one and God is three) is an extension of this divine activity of self-disclosure. Allow me to explain.

On the far side of the cross, God's covenant people were convinced that there was one God. All the so-called gods of the nations around them were no good nothings. The central affirmation of their faith is found in Deuteronomy 6:4: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one LORD."

What had not been revealed to them and what has been revealed to us is that within this one God are three persons or eternal distinctions: Father, Son and Spirit.

This mystery was revealed as Jesus' first followers interacted with their Master. In His presence, they found themselves in the presence of the Almighty. One example is found in Luke 5:8 where Peter, after witnessing Jesus perform a great miracle, fell on his face and cried out: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The story continues after Jesus' ascension into heaven. On the day of Pentecost, His followers found their Master present with them in a new way. The divine Comforter which He promised had come.

For the Christian, the Trinity is more than a dry theological proposition. It is a 'mystery' more thrilling than any found in works of fiction: God above us, God beside us, God in us. Worship Him!

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; We beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. (Collect for Trinity Sunday, The Book of Common Prayer).

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