

I have been labouring to grow plants recently. I have a dodgy history with plants. Presently I am interested in Garlic plants and a Jade plant and a thing like a small Palm Tree that my sister gave me. The latter seems set of doing badly. But I was reading about photosynthesis, the process by which plants suck carbon dioxide out of the air and capture the carbon to grow cells. Plants actually need photons, those little bundles of light waves, to hit them to make the jump to capturing the carbon.

In the last week or two, with abundant sunlight, I have been turning my plants around in the south-facing windows so they can do lots of photon finding.

You have to get them in a beam of light. Trees and buildings, clouds and walls all must be kept out of the way. The photon, which begins in the heart of the sun, comes tumbling down through millions of miles of space and smacks into the green leaf of my plant and KAPOW! It does its photosynthesis thing and that, that alone, is how it grows. Cool, eh?

Centuries ago, when the Church was just a young thing, and the doctrine of the Trinity was not a thing, or a debate but a puzzling over how to describe God, one of the theologians (Athanasius or Augustine of Hippo perhaps) said that God is like the sun in the sky. The Father of all life, high above us. He sends himself to us like the sun sends beams of light. That beam we can see as it passes through dust or falls between the leaves of trees. This beam of the light from on high is like Jesus, who is God in our midst. Something we can see and touch and know and even now is present among us. Where the sunlight strikes we can feel the earth grow warm, the stones become hot. Our touch can tell the presence of the beam bringing sunlight to the ground. Even if we were blind we would be able to know the light had been there.

So the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all the same thing, all God, but manifest in different ways. This is just as the sun in the sky, the beam of light passing between the trees and the warmth in the ground are all the same thing too, but each distinct to us.

For me it is about the huge nuclear reactor at the centre of our solar system throwing off pieces of itself, photon radiation, which fall and crash into plants giving up their energy to enable the chemical, energetic transformation which will give me garlic to eat in the Fall. My bulb of garlic will be made of sunlight!

In my spiritual reality I see the same thing.

I am a “Jesus Christian”. There are “God the Father Christians”, and there are “Spirit Christians”. We each have a style, a feel or a way of finding God. God came alive for me through Jesus. In the same way I am not much for looking at the sun or sunbathing. I don’t greatly like hot sand under my toes, but I adore sunbeams and shafts of light, dappled shade and brightness. The slice of light low and yellow across the clouded skies early after dawn breaks. That is why I get up early, and walk my dog before morning prayers, the hope of seeing this.

Jesus is the light of the Creator-Father falling in a way I can catch sight of. The warmth in my heart when I am touched by that beam, that is the Spirit settling in me, healing and challenging and leading me. It is all the same thing, One God. I know this. And yet it is three different things too.

From early on in the Church Followers of Jesus knew about a man. That is why we say “born of a woman, Mary”, because it anchors him in time and place and family and all the stuff that is true of us too. But this Jesus feels like God the Father. When they remembered him, and when they

prayed to him, it felt the same. There was something which they only grasped in hindsight. Jesus had simply been full of God. They had been taught that God was immeasurably far above them, but here was God in the midst of them. Up close, laughing, eating, crying, touching, loving, dying...and...rising from death. Yes! That is what God is like. A cloud can utterly block out the sun. But that doesn't mean the sun is gone. It will be back. That was the resurrection. You can kill the man who carried God but God will just be back again, just like the morning light or the silver-edging light following the storm.

And they knew too that when you let that light fall on you it changed you. When you listened to the words of Jesus, even told to you, or when you read what was written of his speeches, it settled in you. It stayed in you. It "warmed your heart" like sun on cold rocks. It made you grow differently inside.

Small particles of God lodge in you and give up their energy to make changes happen in your soul-life. They capture pieces of your life and world and the spirit changes you and them for ever. You grow, as it were, in faith.

So the idea of the Trinity teaches us that we need, like my potted garlic plants, my sad and injured Jade and Palm, to be in the light.

To be in the light means to put yourself where you find God to be. That may be different for different people.

I find God in the morning walk. I find God in reading the Gospels and the rest of the Bible. I find God in movies and in stories and the things people here in Grace Church say to me. I let these bits of God sink into me and give me their bundles of Spirit-energy by taking time to be in quiet, wordless prayer. Here the Spirit roves around in my soul and captures pieces of the day, the memories, the imaginings and worries and transforms them with photons of Truth and Love and Grace. Suddenly I am changed and my world is changed, and the way I see a person is transformed. A scary challenge becomes a possibility for light to shine.

The Trinity is not a dry dogma. It is a way of trying to be aware of these three distinct ways in which the oneness of this mystery we call God works in our spiritual lives. It is a wobbly attempt to put words on how real, ordinary Christians feel God at work in us.

The God who is so far above us, majestic, ineffable,
is also is intimately, mother-like, right in the midst of our lives,
in touch-able, feel-able, know-able ways.

Just like a really wonderful person who walks in to your life.

And this touch of God leaves us changed, healed, surprised, given peace, called to serve or a thousand other holy things.

My Palm plant is gingerly attempting to bring a new leaf to birth. I am lining it up for maximum photon exposure.

When you come to Church on a Sunday I spend a lot of my time, thought, ability lining you up for exposure to the Jesus who promises to be here with us.

And God, who knows how to shine around corners, and into the darkest caverns even of the Hells we make, is trying even harder to warm you and grow you with Grace and Love and Peace and New Life.

Even my Jade plant, which collapses regularly, is making upward movement towards the sun. As for the Garlic. Well, like some of the less attractive people you will meet, even in church, God is at work underground, with a harvest obvious only when the plant has apparently died. I live in hope! Don't just affirm the Trinity. Live the Trinity. Let the movement of the Trinity live in you.