

*Based on *Proverbs 8: Divine Wisdom in Creation*

**incarnational translation below*

When I asked our Worship Planning Team how SPC has historically handled Trinity Sunday, there were more than a few chuckles. No need to really go there, we all decided. Way to esoterically doctrinal for us.

Believe me, I get it. In seminary, I spent an entire semester long course slogging through two centuries' worth of teaching on the Trinity. I still could not really tell you what it is all about!

What I can tell you is that the teaching of the Trinity insists even God cannot exist in isolation. Even God requires relationship in order to be whole. Just like us.

It turns out, even the supposedly monotheistic Judaism of the Bible says the same thing. Witness the clearly anthropomorphized Divine Wisdom of our Lesson from Proverbs today, who dances and sings and delights in Creation, working side by side with the ancient God of Israel.

The most widely respected Jewish philosopher of the first century launches what will become the future foundation of Christian trinitarianism when he interprets Proverbs 8 as describing God and Wisdom in equal partnership. The philosopher known as "Philo" insists that "God, his Logos, and his Wisdom are one, while they simultaneously reflect distinct qualities within God and in relation to the created world" (Schafer, 45). Later Christian theologians would say the exact same thing about the Trinity. It turns out, the Philo's first century Jewish triad of God - Logos - Wisdom eventually morphs into the Christian triad of Father - Son - Spirit.

The Divine Wisdom we meet in Proverbs 8, the Divine Wisdom who somewhat surprisingly forms the Jewish foundation for Trinity Sunday, offers a dramatic first-person perspective on creation, an eye-witness account of our origins as a people and a land, celebrating the joy of Divine Presence throughout it all.

The Divine Wisdom we meet in Proverbs 8 was present at the moment of this glorious creation around us, of this glorious creation that *is* us, of this garden of delight in which we have been sent to live. The Divine Wisdom we meet in Proverbs 8 is like a Master Craftswoman laying the foundation of this earth. She is like a joyful child crafting a kin-dom of clay, completely free of creative inhibition.

The Divine Wisdom we meet in Proverbs 8 designs us to dwell together in the Paradise of this creation, as Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker have reminded us: to "live on holy ground in the presence of God, with bodies and souls sanctified by the Spirit's anointing, surrounded by the communion of saints" (417).

We fall far short of practicing this Wisdom of Paradise, do we not? The earth and the people and the Divine Presence around us are crying out for us to live more responsibly and more ethically and more faithfully together.

Divine Wisdom knows this too, and refuses to let go, and does not ever give up on us, even when we fail to live up to the Divine Wisdom embedded in our own created selves. Other texts from Proverbs, both before and after the one we proclaim this morning, reveal a passionate and compassionate Divine Wisdom leaping into the thick of our ongoing and struggling creation, even as we wrestle with our legacies of injustice, even as we experience evil and despair, even as we persecute others and are persecuted ourselves.

In the first few verses of Proverbs 8, for example, Divine Wisdom calls to us from the city gates, identifies herself with the Teachings—the Torah—of God, and urges us to choose these teachings over silver and gold and prestige. A message that is perhaps even more relevant today than it was in the biblical world. A few verses later, in Proverbs 9, the personified Divine Wisdom prepares an extravagant table of food and wine where both the foolish and the wise may learn again what it means to respect and revere the gracious gift of a new life in Paradise.

We gather around a table like this when we celebrate communion. A table where Divine Wisdom in The Way of Jesus joins us for a piece of bread and a sip of wine and a memory of a cross that even today bears the suffering and sin of the world. A table that says Divine Wisdom cannot ever be killed, that the Wisdom of Paradise will always be among us, that the Wisdom of Paradise will always be within us, that the Wisdom of Paradise will not ever let us go.

In his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, the Apostle Paul says Jesus has become for us the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30). Jesus is, according to Paul, Wisdom Made Flesh, just as much as he is Word Made Flesh in the Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John, of course, uses the language of Logos: Word or Reason or Logic. *In the beginning was the Logos of God*, John tells us, intentionally paralleling the role of Divine Wisdom described in Proverbs 8. *And the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. All things were made by the Logos*, John says, again, intentionally paralleling the role of Divine Wisdom described in Proverbs 8.

God - Logos - Wisdom, the foundation of Christian trinitarianism, right there in the Bible, brought together in The Way of Jesus for us on Trinity Sunday 2022.

We celebrate the Logos/Wisdom of God Made Flesh in our midst today through the proclamation of Scripture, and we say that this Living Logos/Wisdom of God Made Flesh in The Way of Jesus transforms us into a new creation. As if we are turning forks eager for the Logos/Wisdom of God to vibrate through every part of our being through every part of our lives from the beginning of time to this present moment. As if the Logos/Wisdom of God becomes flesh right here in this very moment and dwells among us right here and now, full of grace and truth, granting us the power to become the Beloved Community of God, recommitting ourselves to the Wisdom of Paradise.

This is, in the end, what we try to do every Sunday: gathering around a book through which the Living Logos/Wisdom of God transforms us, gathering around a table through which the Living Logos/Wisdom of

Jesus revives us, gathering within a community through which the Spirited work of Saving Paradise presents itself to us. One in Community. Community in One. A Holy Trinity.

Let the church say, Amen!

Works Cited

Brock, Rita Nakashima and Parker, Rebecca. *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2008.

Schafer, Peter. *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God From the Bible to the Early Kabbalah*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

*Incarnational Translation

Proverbs 8:22-31

At the crossroads Divine Wisdom takes her stand,
crying out to all who have ears to hear:

“At the beginning of The Way, before any work began,
the God of ancient Israel acquired me.
Me! Who was established for eternity, from the beginning,
before earth ever was.

I - Divine Wisdom - forged the basin for the watery depths,
I forged the spring before water flowed through it.
I - Divine Wisdom - forged the shape of the mountains and the hills.
before the God of ancient Israel made earth and fields
and the world’s first bits of soil.

When God established the heavens, I - Divine Wisdom was there;
 when God drew a circle on the face of the watery depths,
when God made firm the skies above,
 when God established the fountains of the watery depths,
when God assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not take over everything,
when God marked out the foundations of the earth,
 we worked side by side.

I was like a Master Craftswoman,
and I was daily the delight of God,
 rejoicing side by side,
rejoicing in this habitable earth
 and delighting in the human race.”

"Incarnational translation for preaching seeks to recontextualize biblical texts so that they say and do in new times and places something like what they said and did in ancient times and places" (Cosgrove and Edgerton, **In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching, 62).*