



The Trinity Game

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2013 International Thriller Award Nominee

Daniel Byrne is an investigator for the Vatican's secretive Office of the Devil's Advocate—the department that scrutinizes miracle claims. Over ten years and 721 cases, not one miracle he tested has proved true. But case #722 is different; Daniel's estranged uncle, a crooked TV evangelist, has started speaking in tongues—and accurately predicting the future. Daniel *knows* Reverend Tim Trinity is a con man. Could Trinity also be something more?

The evangelist himself is baffled by his newfound power—and the violent reaction it provokes. After years of scams, he suddenly has the ability to predict everything from natural disasters to sports scores. Now the mob wants him dead for ruining their gambling business, and the Vatican wants him debunked as a false messiah. On the run from assassins, Trinity flees with Daniel's help through the back roads of the Bible Belt to New Orleans, where Trinity plans to deliver a final prophecy so shattering his enemies will do anything to keep him silent.

The Trinity Game Details

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From Reader Review The Trinity Game for online ebook

Chip says

A tremendous disappointment after reading the two (really excellent) Ray Dudgeon PI books. In contrast to those books, which I thought had just excellent characterization, plotting, pace and suspense, this one ... didn't.

SPOILERS ahead: How the heck is the protagonist so competent? Sure, he was a boxer in his youth, so he knows how to throw a punch - but he manages to take down a world renowned master assassin? Really?? Dudgeon has a badass background - you know he can be dangerous. But this guy's a priest!! (But one who, apparently, is comfortable with killing.) And for someone that dedicated 18 (I think) years of his life to the priesthood, and celibacy, he's shockingly willing to toss that away, apparently without much angst over doing so (or, on the flipside, giving up 18 years of his life to it). Dunno that I bought the love connection either - he was 18 and she was 20; now 18 years later they basically just pick up where they left off?

Bottom line, this book seemed amateurish to me, Da Vinci Codeish - shockingly so compared to Chercovers Dudgeon books.

Maureen Carden says

Daniel Byrne has spent his life searching for meaning. Feeling betrayed by his huckster, tent revivalist preacher uncle, Byrne runs away from him for the tender mercies of the Catholic Church. Nurtured through adolescence and into seminary, always encouraged and loved by his priests/ fathers/mentors, Daniel is on his way to a stellar career at the Vatican.

When this story opens he an investigator for the Office of the Devil's Advocate (doncha just love that name?), looking to either debunk or find a true miracle. He is sent to investigate his uncle who has earned great wealth for himself by becoming a T.V. preacher. But his uncle Trinity has started speaking in tongues and making predictions. Predictions which brings Trinity to the attention of the mob, the Vatican and a huge number of people looking for guidance. Daniel jumps on the chance to bring his uncle down.

But it's not so easy. Daniel rediscovers his deep denied love for his uncle and for his former girlfriend, now a reporter for the Times Picayune. Daniel also discovers he is a pawn between two opposing forces in the Vatican and the secular version of that same battle.

This books seems to not know quite what it wants to be, meditation on faith and the ways is manifested or perverted, or as a thriller. But it does fine in combining the two.

Chercovers does a beautiful job in describing New Orleans, especially the Katrina nightmare and the years afterwards. I am confused about one the bridge names that he uses. Best of all-and this makes me want to dance-he talks about the Mardi Gras Indians. Look them up, worth the time. Unless of course you were a Treme fan. "Won't bow, Don't know how."

I want to slug young Daniel for his whiny feelings of betrayal by his uncle, a man who loved him above all things. I'm glad he grew up to be a much better person. I will miss some of the characters who are only for this book, others I hope return for the subsequent books. Especially the villains. Chercovers villains are never

boring.

This was exciting, well plotted and intelligent. I wish I understood the physics explanations better. I've never gotten past that damn cat.

My favorite quote "Maybe you've been touched by God, maybe you've just gone bat shit crazy."

Thank you to NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Holly West says

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. It's fast paced and deals with topics I'm personally interested in. Daniel Byrne, the protagonist, is a priest who works with the Office of the Devil's Advocate at the Vatican and I liked the fact that although he's a priest whose given his life over to God, he's skeptical and therefore great at his job. He's not a man who will certify a miracle just to be doing it--he takes the job very seriously. The uncle who raised him, Tim Trinity, is a grifter who preys on the hopes and wallets of believers, and Daniel left home at a young age, hoping to escape the grifting life, only to find that it also exists in the Church he's given his life to.

When Trinity begins speaking in tongues and making predictions that eerily turn out to be true, Daniel is sent by his superiors in the ODA to investigate. Has he finally found the miracle he's been looking for?

Read the book to find out!

Nigel Bird says

‘The Trinity Game’ is a slick read that had me gripped from close to the opening. To begin, there is an assassination attempt and from there, we skip back a short while to find out how about the events that led up to this moment.

Daniel Byrne is a priest who works for an agency of the Catholic church. Essentially, he's the man who is sent for to investigate and expose fraudulent claims of miracles. His boss gives him the challenge of investigating his own uncle, a phoney con man of a preacher who brought Daniel up as if he were his own son.

Daniel relishes the possibility of bringing down the uncle who exposed him to so much that wasn't true. The thing is, that whilst Tim Trinity (the aforementioned uncle) is speaking in tongues, he's actually making predictions that come true – record his sermons and play his ‘speaking in tongues’ backwards and the messages can be clearly understood. Daniel is surprised by this as it runs counter to the information he's been provided.

Trinity's predictions come in all shapes and sizes. He offers race winners, football scores, on the one hand and warnings of dangerous explosions on the other.

I've never considered the consequences of what might happen if someone could see into the future, but Sean

Chercover clearly has. The mob aren't happy because of the implications for the gambling industry. The church isn't happy because their own god cult will be undermined. The government can't settle because of the possible exposure of their motivations to maintain the status quo. The economic drives of society might be seriously challenged were god to offer insights and messages on morality. In short, there are a lot of agencies who might want to silence Tim Trinity using any means at their disposal.

Chercover has created outstandingly well crafted characters for this story, fully formed people with interesting histories that are interesting in themselves. He's also found big enough scope to allow a reader to focus upon a number of issues – the lengths the swine of the press will go to uncover a pearl; elected governments and their uneasy relationship with freedom of speech; the ambiguities of national security; institutional racism' sexism; and general hypocrisy. This is gently done and only adds to the complexities and pleasure that can be derived from the story. There is plenty to provoke thought, but my eyes were always focussed on what might happen next and the eventual outcome.

I was completely wrapped up in the book and bought the entire premise. It's a tremendous creation that offers far more than your average page-turner.

As I sprinted to the end, I thought I'd been so taken in that I'd begun to expect there'd be a revelation of some kind that might be life-changing. Maybe there'd be a customised message that would help me find a path to follow. Of course, the author couldn't provide that and, instead, he stuck to his job by tying up all the loose ends in the story and making sure the whole thing is bullet proof.

I really enjoyed it and urge you to give it your attention.

Jackie Rogers says

This is the first book in a series of three. Won this one and author was kind enough to send all three. Wasn't sure what to expect in these novels, but was pleasantly surprised. Is a thriller about the Catholic church and a tv preacher. Was drawn in by the action and story line that pitted the two against each other. Also involved family as the preacher's nephew is a catholic priest. Is full of action and adventure as the story carries them to a voodoo priestess. Is funny as well as mysterious. Have started second one to see where this author will take his characters. Thanks to Goodreads.

Amarilli Settantatre says

Ecco un giallo che avevo iniziato piena di aspettative.

Sulla carta sembrava una trama col botto, e poi quest'idea dell'Ufficio dell'Advocatus Diaboli mi intrigava non poco: già mi vedeva un romanzo tipo X-files con preti che indagavano l'ignoto...

Invece, dopo un inizio che faceva ben sperare, il romanzo si perde a mio avviso in troppe strade e troppi temi, mancando il fine ultimo di tenere avvinto il lettore.

A parte la solita tiritera su quanto il Vaticano sia una macchina di denaro e malvagità (sì, i cattolici nel mondo sono solo una burocrazia fondata sul sesso-complotti per destabilizzare i poteri forti e addirittura sono quelli che si affannano a nascondere i messaggi che il buon Gesù ci invia sulla Terra... eccetera...), e già qui ho iniziato a sbagliare.

Poi - ovvio - il nostro prete cattolico investigatore è uno con ventimila pippe, tra fede traballante e crisi da astinenza sessuale...

Tuttavia potevo anche tenere duro. Poi arrivano lo zio in crisi mistica e forse toccato dalla luce divina, l'uragano Katrina, vari complotti dei kattivi contro tutti...

Confesso che ho faticato ad arrivare sino in fondo, e un proseguo delle storie di Gabriel non mi tenta per nulla.

A.M. Dean says

I tottered heavily at thee 'three stars or four' question as I began this review, which should make my opening sentiments a clear sign of general approval. For most of my way through Sean Chercover's *The Trinity Game*, I had in fact considered it a 5-star novel and I was engrossed in every chapter; but a turn towards the end started to lower that mark, and though it still sits right on the edge, I've had to offer three stars rather than four at the end of the day.

The Trinity Game is a strong novel, and in many ways an excellent read. The writing is crafted carefully, well, and in a manner that keeps you addicted to the story, eager to turn over each page, without ever feeling that the suspense or pace are forced. This is good writing, good atmosphere, and good storytelling.

I was intrigued from the outset by the unique and unexpected mixture of themes at the heart of the book's plot. Neither a 'cut down the Catholics for all their mystery and reclusiveness' fabrication, nor a standard jaunt into the realm of snake-oil salesmen and big tent preachers, *The Trinity Game* mixes together these generally separate themes in a story that, almost accidentally, asks questions about the structure of religion, faith, Church, cult and deception. The unlikelihood of a direct interaction between Vatican researchers and American televangelists is dealt with in the story itself, and shows just how broad the sweep of faith and practice can run within a family.

This is a suspense thriller with a twist of conspiracy thrown in, and in this genre it works well. The structure of the book is well planned, and gradually draws the reader into various plots and sub-plots that eventually come together in a single, overarching storyline; and the characters are real, troubled, gripping and inviting. What particularly pleased me about the writing was the way that questions of faith and belief were treated by the different characters with their own biases and opinions, yet in a way that left the book, as a whole, treating of various 'takes' in equal measure. So many books in this category push an agenda on religion -- it is good, or bad; it is misleading, or outmoded; etc. -- but *The Trinity Game* leaves it to the reader to ask these questions, and allows the characters to speak to many perceptions.

All that being said, the extremely promising beginnings of *The Trinity Game* (and as I was reading, I was prepared to give it a 5-star rating up until this conclusion of Part 2) definitely takes a downhill turn towards the book's end. Structurally, the introduction of a whole separate religious tradition at the end of Part 2 (I won't say which, so as not to provide any spoilers), which had been entirely absent from the book to that point, felt like a plot development that hadn't been developed: something that might have felt more integral had there been hints or foreshadowings of it earlier in the story -- but as it was, it fractured the story by inserting a tradition and questions that felt like they were from another book altogether. At the same time, while the Council and Foundation (mysterious entities of unknown power and moral standing) were introduced early in the book, they don't receive any real treatment or development until Part 3, almost at its end -- and by this stage it is too late, and I couldn't help but feel like they were being used to explain away elements of the story that, without them, would remain mystifying.

Finally, I found the relationship between the protagonist, a priest called Daniel, and the female lead, a reporter and childhood sweetheart called Julia, unsatisfying. It has long, long since become a trope in books that deal with Catholic priests, that somewhere in the story the temptations of the world (and of women) lead them to abandon their calling; and in a book that spends so much time (artfully) challenging preconceptions of faith, belief and personal conviction, I'd hoped for a challenge to this stereotype as well -- but to no avail.

Still, *The Trinity Game* is a good, compelling read. No one who buys it will regret they did, and the great merit of the first two-thirds still outweighs the flaws of the final. Chercover's writing is thoroughly pleasant, and includes a handful of memorable turns of phrase (such as one character's frustration over 'Ten years [spent examining] rust-stains that look kinda-sorta-almost like Jesus if you squint your eyes just so and hold your head on an angle and harbor an intense desire to see Jesus in a rust-stain'; or the lament that 'living in a perpetual state of denial was exhausting'; or a newspaper reporter's chagrined sigh, that 'television is a possum with a tapeworm . . . always hungry and it'll feed on any garbage'). There are little gems like this throughout the book, and many memorable quotes for the highlighting.

A good read, then, with some flaws but with many strengths. I'll be looking out for Chercover's next work.

Peter says

The Trinity Game (2012) is the first in Sean Chercover's Trinity Trilogy (now called The Daniel Byrne Series). Unlike most thrillers, the characters are largely drawn from the religious world—the Vatican and the Protestant tent revival circuit—and the story smacks of the occult. This is an interesting novel that stretches the mind with questions like: Do miracles occur? What are the implications of knowing the future or, more broadly, of everyone knowing that you know the future? What are the consequences of forbidden love? What is God's real commandment?

The main character is Father Daniel ("Danny") Byrne, once a Golden Gloves champion and now a priest. His uncle, Reverend Tim Trinity, is a successful TV evangelist with a revival tent history. An orphan, Byrne was raised by Trinity until he realized that his uncle was a con man; he left home at an early age and eventually entered the priesthood. Danny is now attached to the Vatican's Office of the Devil's Advocate as an investigator of the validity of reported miracles. His boss, Father Nick, has sent him to Lagos, Nigeria, to investigate reports of a young girl showing the stigmata.

Danny concludes that it is a hoax when he sees the girl puncturing her palms with nails. His personal disappointment is intense—he would love to find just one true miracle! But there is serious resistance to that finding: Father Winter, head of the Office of World Outreach and a member of the secret Council of World Peace, wants the miracle to be confirmed because Nigeria is increasingly Islamic and many provinces have adopted Sharia law: a true Christian miracle would slow down that process. In other words, the politics trumps truth even at the Vatican.

Danny's job in Nigeria done, he returns to Rome and is given another mission: to investigate reports that his uncle is doing miraculous things. It turns out that recently the Reverend Tim Trinity has begun speaking in tongues. Specifically, he speaks English in reverse at slow speed—to understand him one must tape him, reverse the tape and run it at higher-than-normal speed. This creates two miracles. First, reputable speech analysts say that it is impossible to fake this language reversal. Second, and far more mysterious, the Reverend's speech-in-tongue makes bizarrely accurate predictions about weather, sports, calamities, politics, and so on. If knowledge of this gets out the world will be in turmoil—the democratic process will end

because with a known outcome, there is no reason to vote; the insurance industry will grid to a halt—nobody will insure a risk whose outcome is known; new businesses won't be formed unless they are known to be a slam-dunks, meaning that few new business will start and economic growth will stagnate. Couples won't marry if they know it will end in divorce. The list goes on.

Danny reconnects with his uncle and reaches a remarkable conclusion: the Rev has no idea what he is saying so is unaware of his predictions. He just suddenly displayed this talent. Father Byrne has just found a true miracle—and it's in his own back yard. Furthermore, the word is getting out and people are reacting: one crook running a gambling book has a contract out on the Rev because nobody will take the losing side of a bet on an event with a known outcome. Many thousands of people are descending on the Rev's home in Atlanta to be close to God's messenger, bringing everything in Atlanta to a halt. People attend Trinity's Church in the hope of getting stock tips.

To add to Danny's problems, Julia, his lover from pre-priesthood days, has become an investigative reporter and is working on the Trinity Anomaly. This brings him into contact with her again and reawakens his unpriestly side. So we have an interesting matter of forbidden love added to the mystery of Tim Trinity and the potentially catastrophic implications of his new talent. We are in new territory for the thriller genre. What fun!

The romp to the finish involves post-Katrina New Orleans, the nefarious Council for World Peace, the scheming Father Winter, a Voodoo priestess, and lots of imagination. Fasten your seat belt!

Four stars.

Kristen Lamb says

I make it a habit to only review books that hook me and blow me away. As an editor for many years, I find it difficult to just get sucked into a story. I REALLY enjoyed "The Trinity Game." Not only did it have a great plot with loads of twists and turns, but the characters were living, breathing people. Bravo.

Benjamin Cheah says

The Trinity Game is a solid thriller. It is an engrossing work with well thought-out characters and shows extensive research into technology, geography and psychology. It's a story of skeptics finding faith in the face of (maybe) miracles and believers protecting their interests through any means necessary. It's also a story of the real world, where miracles have mundane explanations, where the rich and the powerful decide world interests, and where the good guys don't, or can't, win every battle.

While classed as a 'religious thriller', The Trinity Game is less religious (except when describing power plays in the Catholic church) and more spiritual, in the sense that this is less about Catholicism and scripture and more about personal journeys to find the divine in a world riddled with corruption.

This novel is a major departure from Chercov's previous works. Chercov's previous work is strictly hardboiled crime fiction. While this story uses many tropes from hardboiled fiction, it also incorporates

literary devices from other genres. One such trope is the vague near-omnipotent organisations warring the shadows over the course of humanity. That is the one major knock against the book. While they are introduced early on, they are left vaguely described throughout the course of the books, showing up largely when convenient. Even their goals are vague.

Chercovers has mentioned that this is the first book of a series. The Trinity Game is a fine start, though I hope Chercovers would shine more light into the workings of the organisations.

Michele Whitecotton says

Unlike the general opinion, I didn't like this book very much. It started out good, but got very...congested. There just became too many characters with too many different agendas. The author did a good job of making sure it didn't get confusing. I was never confused about what was going on, it was just a bit overwhelming to keep track of all these characters. Each one had their own things going on with one common goal, to get to Tim Trinity, but each and every character had their own reasons for wanting him. I struggled to get through til the end and I hung in there and finished it but I don't think I would ever recommend it to anyone.

Bryan Raines says

To start off I would like to say that I would have given this book 3 1/2 stars if I had the option. I couldn't give it four stars, but I think it deserves better than 3 stars.

This is one of those books I am happy I read, but frustrated I finished. The ideas in my head seemed to be a bit grander than what the author intended. The finish left me feeling underwhelmed.

It is a fast paced book with lots of intrigue and drama. The characters are very well thought out. The main character irked me a bit. I thought I was going to go on thrill ride with a priest who questioned his path in life. For the most part that was true, but it felt more like I was on a thrill ride with someone who never wanted to be a priest and didn't believe in anything a priest would. I wanted to see through the eyes of someone who loves their religion, but isn't afraid to question it. Instead, I went on a thrill ride with someone who only questioned.

It is a fun read and, even though I didn't like the ending, made me think. I have decided to remember the book with my own private ending.

Gerald Sinstadt says

As a reader I am irritated by sweepingly dismissive reviews; they need some justification. As a grateful recipient of a gift, I feel a responsibility to provide a considered review of any book. The Trinity Game, I am sorry to say, has tested me to the limit.

I also have a problem in not wishing to reveal an important plot element. In this case, I will restrict myself to saying that the matter of Speaking in Tongues is investigated - and exposed - with a technique I find simply

unbelievable. As is the actual achievement in the first place. So, too, the coincidental relationship between the investigator and the evangelist "who just happens to be his estranged uncle."

The Trinity Game seems like an attempt to ride the wave of popularity for The Da Vinci Code. I didn't like that, either, but clearly many did. This is just one reader's record of disappointment.

Fabián Tapia says

Daniel es un sacerdote llamado "el abogado del Diablo" Él se encarga de investigar casos o milagros para saber si son auténticos o si son un fraude. La sorpresa radica cuando descubre que su tío—Tim Trinity—al dar sus discursos da profecías (si se escuchan sus discursos al revés) y que todas son ciertas. A raíz de eso, Daniel escucha una profecía e intenta detener la explosión de una refinería y es ahí cuando decide creer. Primero que nada, debo decir que la portada me encantó. Los colores, la tipografía y el logo son fascinantes *—*.

Segundo, como todo amante de Thrillers, no me podía perder este libro que fue nominado a un Premio Internacional de Thriller (como dato extra: Gillian Flynn , autora de Perdida [lean mi reseña 7u7] y Stephen King con Mr. Mercedes ganaron un premio :))

Cuando lo comencé, me llamó mucho la atención que el protagonista fuera un sacerdote y su relación con su tío. Todo este ambiente del Vaticano, los milagros y las conspiraciones me interesan sobremanera y solo he leído a Dan Brown y Umberto Eco, quienes manejan estos temas de una forma muy reveladora...[más el primero, para mi gusto] Así que cuando descubrí a este autor me llamó cómo los manejaría a su manera. Y me gustó.

Sean Chercover agiliza mucho todos estos temas. Los capítulos tienen máximo seis páginas, lo que brinda una rapidez a la trama pero suficiente para masticar todas las ideas.

Me gustaron mucho los cambios de escenario. Sean nos lleva a Nueva Orleans, Nigeria, Roma, entre otros destinos más. Conocer un poco de cada uno de ellos fue muy interesante, en especial sobre los estragos del huracán Katrina y de los conflictos religiosos en esos puntos.

Hablando de éstos, me gustó que el autor pone a reflexionar sobre los daños de la religión y también sobre sus ventajas. El hecho de ser imparcial es algo que siempre busco en un autor.

Y por otro lado, ¡qué genial fue lo del tío Trinity! Me sorprendieron sus profecías, su don y toda la construcción de su personaje. Las relaciones que guardaba con los demás se me hicieron misteriosas y la resolución de ellas me dejó satisfecho.

Lo único que no me gustó fue que esperaba una historia con más voltaje, aunque fue lo suficiente para mantenerme con interés.

Les recomiendo El Juego de Trinity si les gustan las historias atrapantes, que hablen de la religión sin atiborrarte, con personajes bien construidos y con pensamientos provocadores.

Sharon says

A very exciting read as criminal elements attempt to kill a televangelist who has somehow acquired the gift of prophecy endangering special interests including the Vatican and the gambling syndicate. The evangelist is on the run while his nephew, a Catholic priest attempts to protect him and the press is doing its best to report the story. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

