

Children

I have two things there, one is a teaspoon and one is a glass. I want a volunteer to fill this glass with water. It seems like something you could do by going to the kitchen and putting water on the spoon and coming back here and putting the water in the glass. It would take time and could be done.

But that is not what I want you to do.

What I want you to do is take the spoon here at APG and go to the Chesapeake Bay and bring the water back here. Yes you could do it it would just take more time.

But what I really want you to do is take all the water from the Bay and put it into this glass.

That's right you could not do it.

In the Church we have things called mysteries that we don't completely understand but we get some understanding of them.

God is a big mystery and the Trinity is even bigger.

As children you go to school and study hard so that you can understand some things, like what is $2+2$

It's not 5?

But when you were babies you didn't understand that. As you grow and study you learn more. What if I told you that $A+B=C$. You would think I'm crazy but those who have taken algebra will know that is true.

So continued study helps you understand. I know a lot about the Trinity, I have even written articles on it. But I don't know it all. I through study know a lot about theology or religion but not everything. I probably know more than most of your parents. But, I can change a tire but I can't repair my car when the lights go on on the dashboard.

So when you are young you keep studying so that you understand more and more and one of the things you should study is what our Church teaches.

I

Today's sermon is not based on the Trinity, which is an area I love to preach and write upon but on a reflection on today's world

If you should ask the question: "What is wrong with our world today?" you would probably get as many answers as there are persons who are interrogated. Indeed, it is often like the foreman of a jury who was asked by the judge whether the jury had reached a verdict. "Yes, your Honor," she replied, "we have reached twelve verdicts."

Yet "In our great concern in this country politically over the right and the left, we have forgotten that there is also an above and below." Or more biblically: "There is also light and darkness."

Well, the Word of God has not changed. The question in our society today is not right or left, it is RIGHT or WRONG. It is light or darkness. The Word of God still speaks of the difference between sin and righteousness, the difference between morality and corruption, the difference between truth and falsehood, the difference between good and evil, the difference between purity and decay, the difference between heaven and hell, between redemption and destruction, between God and Lucifer, between day and night, between light and darkness.

Today I speak on the subject of Judgment. Judgment! Oh, yes, I know, I know that unfortunately, like so many great Christian truths, we have literalized them to the point where they seem childish and primitive and grotesque, and, as modern sophisticates, we can easily reject them as unbelievable or certainly as unacceptable to the mind of modern man. The picture, in our literalism, of Almighty God waiting until the so-called Judgment Day and then running the whole race of mankind, person by person, through His divine courtroom for a quick bench trial and a directed verdict of "guilty and Hell," or "not guilty and Heaven" is just as easy for me to reject as it is for you. Like many other Christian truths, however, I suspect that we have made this one just as ridiculous as possible, so that we can all disbelieve it.

Well, if you are one of those who thinks that the idea of punishment as presented in the Word of God is nonsensical enough that it can be laughed off with impunity, THEN THINK AGAIN! The Greeks were quite sophisticated people also, you know. They couldn't accept the old Hebrew idea of judgment. And so the Apostle John wrote to the Greeks in the Third Chapter of his Gospel in a way that confronts both them and us with a judgment that is inescapable. "This is the judgment," he writes, "that light has come into the world; and

men loved darkness better than light, because their works were evil." THIS THEN IS JUDGMENT - THAT MEN LOVE DARKNESS; and that smacks all of us moderns right where we stand, and we can't laugh that off.

The inescapable judgment of light confronts all of us. When light comes, it shows up everything. You'll notice that even when we are physically soiled or disheveled, we like to stick to the shadows as much as we can. Light can be beautiful - as the power companies would assure us - but it is also a discriminating test. It is always a judge. What got by in the dark doesn't get by in the light. I was thinking of this not long ago when we were in a restaurant, and the place was so dark that you couldn't read the menu without striking a match. I was wondering whether it was the food they served there or what they expected to go on in the place that caused them to keep the place so dark.

Light has come into the world in one realm after another, and everyone and everything is under its inevitable judgment. Oh, there are no outward dramatics, no cosmic courtroom with a big Father God with a long white beard, sitting on a throne, separating the sheep from the goats. That is not what Scripture means! That is not what Scripture means at all! We insist on making the figures of speech literal expositions of Scripture and, thus, distort them. This is not some kind of a post-mortem, as though we need fear only some future judgment or sentence, but, rather, as John pictured it to the Greeks, a real, palpable, contemporary, continuous light showing up things in us and in our world that can't STAND light. This, beloved, is judgment; and you can't escape that judgment, and neither can I. After all, there is no sin, until the light comes, and then there is.

When men had only tom-toms as musical instruments, it wasn't ignorance for them to love tom-toms or the monotonous beat of that drum. But now, since Mozart and Beethoven and Brahms and Bach have come, to still love the noise of the tom-toms best of all is artistic sin. And we still love it, don't we? We like to beat our drums just like the primitives.

Once cannibalism wasn't wrong. It wasn't wrong to eat the flesh of a fellow human being, and cannibalism existed among our ancestors in Europe and Great Britain until as late as the 4th Century. No one felt guilty about it. But now light has come and it is sin. And this is the whole idea of sin in John's Gospel. It is the REFUSAL of light. This is the trouble, you see, with almost every one of the besetting sins in our society. They are a REFUSAL of light!

Once slavery was taken for granted in the world. Once it was perfectly all right to make another race inferior by color of skin, or stature, or wealth, or intelligence, or military prowess or any other kind of criteria that you wanted to conjure up. But now, in the light that Christ brings, you can't do that anymore. I grew up in this state. I remember colored only restrooms. I remember going to the drug store and going in with my father to pick up medicine and there was a window outside of the pharmacy where the coloreds could pick up their medicine. But having moved from the north where negroes and whites were in class together I committed the heinous sin of asking my school principal in Leonardtown, why there were no negroes in the school. I got after school detention for seven days just for asking. This is the way it WAS in darkness; and this is the way many would like to keep it, because they love darkness. They love to lord it over other races and colors and creeds and nationalities and ethnic groups. They love to lord it over them by any measure that they can, and so they cling to the darkness.

So one of our fellow Catholics back in the fifties could write to his diocesan newspaper a letter printed in one issue: "Sir: When we sell our house to a Negro family or encourage Negroes to buy in white neighborhoods, are we not breaking the Seventh Commandment by failing to assist our neighbor in improving and protecting his property? What spiritual gain or satisfaction does one receive by moving into an area where he is not wanted?"

Now, there's a fellow who would do well at just about the time of the Babylonians. That's about the level of his light. He refused the light of Jesus Christ that says that there is a law that supercedes the Ten Commandments - that SUPERCEDES THE TEN COMMANDMENTS - and fulfills all of them, and that is the law of love. According to the law of love, you have no right on God's green earth to make any place - be it your so-called private property or not - where ANY person in this world is not wanted. Christ, the light, came to the outcasts, the despised, the downtrodden, the unwanted people of the world. He brought the light. But we love darkness!

Once it was perfectly in order to starve an enemy to death. That was a perfectly acceptable tactic of warfare for a long time in history, it was called a seige. And it was perfectly acceptable morality to say contemptuously: "Am I my brother's keeper?" When Cain asked that question, it was a valid question. He wanted information. WAS he his brother's keeper? But now light has come. Christ has pointed out that every person in this human family of ours, whether we like it or not or regardless of our opinion, is our brother. Every human being is our brother, and WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIM!

In our time many people have their ears so attuned to the moral rebels of our society and what they have to say that they are deaf to the voice of Christ, the light.

A pair of Christian parents from out of town came to me asking me that I consult with their daughter, an eighteen-year-old high school graduate who is employed here in the city. They were worried that her behavior was not reflecting her upbringing in her home and her church. When, inexplicably, she came - I don't know why, unless it was to make a personal confession - I asked this very attractive, young woman what her parents were worried about. She replied that their trouble was that they just didn't know what it was like to be 18 in 2020. They just didn't understand her. I asked her bluntly: "Are you a good girl?" "Well," she replied, "that all depends upon what you mean by good. I suppose that you wouldn't think I was good, because I enjoy making love to men." Of course, she reassured me that she was smart enough to be on the Pill. "Are you mixed up with dope?" I asked. "Oh, I smoke a little pot now and then, but I've only experimented a little with acid and the hard stuff." "When you are out at night," I asked, "why don't you call your parents once in a while and let them know where you are and what you're doing?" "Oh, I suppose I should," she replied, "but if I've gone out for the express purpose of getting drunk, I can hardly call them, can I? Don't get me wrong," she said, "I don't intend to keep this up forever. When I'm older and I've had all the fun I want to have, then I'll get married and settle down and have a family. I'll probably even go back to church." "Tell me," I asked her, and I looked at this young lady who was brought up in one of our little churches out in the rural section, the picture of the all-American girl, trim and lovely, fresh-faced, "when you have a daughter of your own, will you want her to do just as you are doing? Will you want her to feel that you just don't know what it's like to be 18 in 2040?" And suddenly her proud, defiant face crumpled. She lowered her head and in spite of herself, she blushed. And then she spoke, and her whole case fell apart as she said: "No, I don't suppose I'd want a daughter like that." We all love darkness, but, somehow, we can't live in it as happily as we think we'd like to.

Christ said: "I came not to judge the world but to redeem the world." But in another place He says: "For judgment I came into the world, and if I judge, my judgment is true." Contradiction? It sounds almost like a head-on collision. No, there is no contradiction. The explanation is plain as day. Christ is light. He did not come into the world to judge the world, but, in coming, He cannot HELP but judge the world, because He is light. But even as He judges it, He must redeem it, because of all of the darkness that His light reveals.

The light leaves no secrets. It exposes all of the deceptions, all of the sinful contradictions, all of the bitter meanness within us. The light is there, and it always, somehow, gets through. Be sure of that! Hide in the darkness all you want to. Cling to your precious little darkneses! Hang on to them! But the penetrating judgment of the light of Christ will reach even you. As Dostoevsky reminds us in *Crime and Punishment*: "When a man thinks that he has done with God, and he has smote with violence everything of God within him, yet, in the end, God breaks through to him."

Browning puts it another way: "Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch, a flower bell, someone's death, and, lo, He stands before us, blocking our path so that we cannot go on until we have dealt with Him."

Judgment? Believe me, in the truth of God, it is not some joke out of the pages of the Bible. Judgment? This is judgment - that light has come into the world. Have you noticed? Light has come into the world!

Some men love darkness better than light. What about you?

Based on CSS Publishing Co., Inc., Survival In The Rat Race, by Louis H. Valbracht

A ridiculous story made the rounds years ago. Most of you have heard the story, but I wonder if you have caught its religious significance.

It is about a pilot and three passengers--a boy scout, a priest, and an atomic scientist--and a plane that develops engine trouble in mid-flight.

The pilot rushes back to the passenger compartment and exclaims, "The plane is going down! The plane is going down! We only have three parachutes, and there are four of us!" Then the pilot adds, "I have a family waiting for me at home. I must survive!" With that, he grabs one of the parachutes and jumps out of the plane. At this point, the atomic scientist jumps to his feet and declares, "I am the smartest man in the world. It would be a great tragedy if my life was snuffed out!" With that, he also grabs a parachute and exits the plane.

With an alarmed look on his face, the priest says to the Boy Scout, "My son, I have no family. I am ready to meet my Maker. You are still young with much ahead of you. You take the last parachute."

With this, the Boy Scout interrupts the priest, "Relax, Father. Don't say any more. We're all right."

The priest asks, "How in the world can you say that we are all right?"

The Boy Scout replies, "The reason we're all right is that the world's smartest man just jumped out of the plane wearing my knapsack!"

Silly joke, but there is an important lesson to be derived from it. Metaphorically, there are many smart people today, successful people, affluent people who are jumping out of airplanes wearing knapsacks instead of parachutes. That is, they are reaching for ideas and philosophies that are very appealing, but those ideas and philosophies will not save them. They are knapsacks, not parachutes. In other words, people today need something they can believe in, and many are looking in the wrong places.

Buckminster Fuller coined phrases "Spaceship Earth" and "doing more with less" created the geodesic dome and Dymaxion sleep (work 6 hours, sleep for 30 minutes giving a 22 hour work day) as a strategy that the United States could adopt to win World War II.¹ once said: "The universe is a locked safe with the combination on the inside."

Buckminster Fuller was an amazing man, but for once in his life, this brilliant Englishman was dead wrong. The universe is not a locked safe with the combination inside. There IS meaning and purpose to this world we live in and that meaning and purpose is available to all those who seek it. There is available to us and to everyone on this planet a body of truth that is knowable, understandable, and eternal.

The early church summed up this truth in the doctrine we know as the Trinity: God, the Father; God, the Son; God, the Holy Spirit.

Now it is sometimes difficult to get people excited about Christian doctrines--especially that of the Trinity. It sounds so deep and so mysterious. But bear with me, if you will. There is an important truth in this ancient doctrine that you and I need to see.

You won't find the word "Trinity" in the Bible. In fact, you won't find it in the writings of the early church fathers until the third century after Christ's resurrection.

The concept of the Trinity is a product of the third century church, but it is based upon sound Biblical faith. This doctrine . . . God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit . . . properly understood . . . meets the deepest needs that we have in terms of understanding who God is and what our relationship to Him is all about. Let's explore this great truth together.

You are familiar with the basic structure of the Trinity.

We begin with God. God the Father: omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, everlasting. This is the God who spoke and the world was created. This is the God who guides the stars, who rules the heavens, who orders the planets in their orbits. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--as well as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This is God in His transcendent authority, Lawgiver and Judge, the God whose ways are not our ways, the God whose glory is told by the heavens.

This is the God in whom all of us believe, as do most of the world's people. For many of us, however, this God of transcendence seems far removed from us, out of touch with our needs, our concerns--unapproachable, and unyielding.

And this is why God the Father revealed His true nature in a gentle, compassionate man, Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus we see God the Son cradling young children in his arms, and treating all persons with dignity and respect. In Jesus, the Son, we are exposed to the approachable side of God, the God who would lay down his own life in behalf of the creatures He had formed out of the clay of earth. Without Jesus we would never have known what God was really like. Jesus told us to call Him, "Daddy." He taught us about God's love and showed us His grace.

Auca tribe It allowed missionaries to begin translating the New Testament into the language of the Aucas. But there were difficulties. For example, the translators had difficulty putting the word "reconciled" into the Auca language. One of the most important verses in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 5:18, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ." Reconciliation is a critical word in understanding the Christian faith. The missionaries searched diligently for an equivalent word in the Auca language for the word "reconciled" but found none.

Then, one day a translator was traveling through the jungle with some of the Aucas. They came to a narrow, deep ravine, and the missionary thought they could go no farther. The Aucas, however, took out their machetes and cut down a large tree so that it fell over the ravine, permitting them all to cross safely. The translator, listening intently to the Aucas, discovered that they had a word for "a tree across the ravine" and the translator decided this was the word for the meaning of reconciliation that he was looking for. Jesus was the tree laid across the chasm that separated humanity from God. (2)

Christ is our bridge to God and to salvation. We are grateful for God the Father in all His power and glory. But we are also grateful for God the Son in all his gentleness and grace, for he allows us to approach God with confidence. Because of Christ, we know that God is our Daddy, or, if you will, our Mommy. God the Father loves us more than our own parents love us. We know that because of Christ the Son.

But, of course, there is a third person in the Trinity just as important as the first two. That is the God the Holy Spirit. According to I John 4, our life in the world is actually Christ's life lived within us. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that presence in our lives that allows us to get our lives together, to achieve spiritual discipline and direction, to take charge of our lives and channel them in ways that glorify God and enrich the world.

The word "organize" has a Latin root word that suggests something akin to playing an organ, especially a pipe organ. To play a pipe organ one must get all fifteen hundred pipes to sound in harmony. For many of us, it is all too apparent that we are restrained and restricted from being effective and successful in our living because of inner conflicts that are tearing us apart. A war is going on inside of us. We are being pushed and pulled from within. We desperately need the Spirit of God to come into our lives and take those warring thoughts and feelings and bring them together.

To achieve such a unity of mind and heart requires a surrender of all we are and all we hope to be to the presence and power of God. The sad truth is that many of us want only a partial experience of God's Spirit without total surrender.

A letter was once mailed to General Electric from a little girl in the third grade who had chosen to investigate electricity for her class project.

"I'm trying to get all the information on electricity I can," her letter said, "so please send me any booklets and papers you have. Also would it be asking too much for you to send me a little sample of electricity?"

In like fashion, many of us want just a little sample of the Spirit. We don't want the Spirit to come in all its fullness. We tremble at the idea of God coming into our lives and taking total possession of our thoughts, our feelings, our dreams, our ambitions. Thus, because we want only a sample of God's Spirit, we never achieve that oneness of mind and purpose so necessary for effective living.

The Holy Spirit is the inward evidence, the indwelling presence, that which allows us to organize and prioritize our lives. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the peace and assurance to cope daily with life's varied demands. There is a story in the Old Testament that illustrates this truth. God had chosen King Saul to rule over Israel, but Saul was a disappointment to God. And so we read in 1 Samuel 16:25 that the Spirit of the Lord left King Saul. And when that happened, Saul was filled with depression and fear.

I know lots of people who are filled with depression and fear. Here is the reason. Somehow the Holy Spirit has slipped out of their lives. It is the Holy Spirit that gives a lift to our lives and helps us stand on higher ground. Without that Spirit our lives are like a barren desert.

A mother and child once stood looking at the beautiful picture of Christ standing at the door knocking. After a moment of thought, the mother said, "I wonder why they don't let him in?"

The child considered this and then replied, "The reason they don't let him in is that they are down in the cellar and they can't hear him knocking."

It is the Holy Spirit that lifts us out of the cellars of life by giving us inner evidence of the power and purpose of God.

Do you see now why this doctrine of the Trinity is so important to us? God the Father--our creator, sustainer, the Source of all that is or was or will ever be. God the Son--our Savior, Redeemer, the one who gave his life for us that we might know how much God loves us. And God the Holy Spirit--the evidence of the indwelling Christ and our enabler in life's daily crises. This is the meaning of the Trinity. This is the truth that allows us to

live our lives as a follower of the Christ. God has come down; Christ has died for us and on the third day was resurrected; the Holy Spirit is waiting to come into the lives of all who seek to follow Jesus, as evidence of God's presence.

Why settle for a knapsack instead of a parachute? Indeed, why settle for a parachute when there is a *Paraclete*? A parachute gently lowers us to the ground; a *Paraclete*, which is the Biblical word for the Spirit, lifts us to the heavens. I pray that you will allow that same Spirit into your life today. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. Contributed. Source unknown.

2. Dennis Davidson, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/god-demonstrates-his-love-dennis-davidson-sermon-on-gods-love-159565.asp>.

Dynamic Preaching, Collected Sermons, by King Duncan

III

The Athanasian Creed, in which this doctrine was first set forth in detail, declares that no one can be saved unless he believes it.

But it places a severe burden on our understanding. It is not easy to believe that God can be one and three at the same time. A contemporary theologian has said of the Trinity, "While one may be in danger of losing his soul by denying it, he is in danger of losing his wits in trying to understand it."

We are dealing here with a paradox and a mystery, and the church has always rejected easy ways of trying to solve it. I lectured once on this subject to a group of religious educators, and in the discussion that followed, one teacher said, "I have had no trouble in explaining the Trinity to my class. I use this analogy. Water comes in three forms. It is a liquid, but it may also be congealed matter, as in ice, or a vapor, as in steam. Still it is the same substance. So it is with the God whom we know as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." I had to reply, "You mean well, but you are guilty of what the early church called 'the modalistic heresy,' dealing with the three persons as mere modes or appearances behind which must be some unknown fourth reality of which they are modes."

The same applies to other analogies, such as the sun, sunlight, and sunshine. The church teaches that each of the three persons of the Trinity is God himself, not just an appearance of God. God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, is the one and only true God. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Redeemer of the world, is not just the greatest of men, prophet, and martyr, but "very God of very God." The Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, is God himself dwelling in human hearts. Yet there are not three Gods but one God. How can this be?

Our ordinary arithmetic cannot figure it out. Saint Augustine, one of the greatest intellectual giants of all time, wrestled with this problem for days. Finally he had a vision in which he saw a little boy filling a pail with water from the ocean, carrying it some distance, and then dumping it in another place. "What are you doing, little boy?" asked Augustine. "I am moving the ocean from this place to that place," said the boy. "You foolish lad," said Augustine, "you cannot empty the ocean with your little pail." "You call me foolish," replied the boy, "but what about you? Do you think that with your human mind you will succeed in encompassing the mind of God and emptying the depths of the Trinity?" Augustine awoke and concluded: The only way to think of the Trinity is to think of the unfathomable love of God which unites creation and redemption and is made real to us through the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit has led us into the presence of the God who reveals himself in Christ, then our only adequate response is the awe of worship and the commitment of faith. We say with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33).

We join the worship of the church through the ages, "We laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of thy glory." And we respond with our whole lives, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." But when instead of worship and commitment we seek an intellectual interpretation of the meaning of this revelation of God, we are on the road that leads inevitably to the doctrine of the Trinity.

That is precisely what happened to the early church. The Bible has no such explicit doctrine and no such word. There is no basis for it in the Old Testament unless one reads Christian theology into it. The faith of Judaism was and continues to be simple monotheism: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God" (Deuteronomy 6:14). Yet against the background of this strict adherence to the one God and in full accord with it, rose the apostolic Christian community with its new living contact with God in Christ. The first Christians confessed, "Jesus is Lord," and they lived by the gifts of his Spirit. They constituted a fellowship of the Spirit which their Lord Jesus Christ had given them after returning to the Father who had sent him. Thus they had implicit faith in the Trinity, although there was no need as yet to think it through or to coin a word for the conclusion. In this faith they would encourage one another, for example, to "be filled with the Spirit ... always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Ephesians 5:18-20).

The Trinitarian faith of the church of the New Testament finds its clearest expression in the two passages.

In the "great commission," often called the charter by which the church operates, the Lord gives his church the mandate to make disciples of all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in the order in which the church was later to formulate the doctrine, and it is significant that baptism was to be in the name, not names, of the one God. It is also significant that in the apostolic benediction, which likewise refers to the three persons, the order is changed. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" is first. While these texts became important in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine itself does not rest on any specific isolated passages of scripture but on the content of the Christian revelation as a whole. It is the entire gospel in a nutshell.

As such it is the specific Christian concept of God. Although the apostles did not raise the question of how God could be both one and three, once the question was raised, the church could be true to itself only by replying in terms of the Trinity. It is the only answer which does justice both to the centrality of Christ and to the continuing reality of the presence of Christ. The Trinity is, first of all, an affirmation of the centrality of Christ in the faith of the church. Had the church not felt constrained to assert emphatically that Christ is nothing less than "very God of very God," there would have been no need for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Greek antiquity was familiar with various "sons of God," men who were regarded as having achieved the rank of deity or at least of demi-god.

The 318 church fathers assembled at Nicea, who declared Christ to be "very God of very God," could not help literally tearing to pieces an Arian confession written in such vein. To the church, Christ was no demi-god or a deification of man but the very incarnation of God, the Word become flesh. It was because the center of its faith, "God in Christ," was challenged, that the church was led to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Trinity is the revelation of God, given in Christ, and continuing to operate in the Holy Spirit. God is one, not in the sense of barren arithmetic but in a higher and richer threefold sense in which God remains the one true God even though he reveals himself to us in Christ and continues to communicate himself to us in the Holy Spirit. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, the Son of God is our Lord and Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit makes redemption real in our experience. This kind of logic can be grasped only from the center of the gospel: God is love. Augustine was right, "You have an insight into Trinity, if you have an insight into love." Just as love is the last word about God, so Trinity is the last word in the doctrine of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as the Athanasian Creed holds, shows a Christian how he is to think about God. The church clings to this way of thinking because no acceptable substitute has been offered. But any thinking about God is a poor substitute for confronting God himself. The Trinity becomes meaningful to us only when the Spirit operating in the Christian fellowship leads us to acknowledge in personal living faith: "Jesus is Lord."