

Searcher of Majesty

CHAPTER 1

WHENEVER I smell something burning, I'm inclined to jump to the conclusion that some woman is thinking. A friend of mine who happens to be a research bacteriologist would agree with me. By her own admission she was once making some valuable first-hand observations on vegetable oxidation, when she was interrupted most inopportunistically by her mother, who began sputtering and coughing most unscientifically, but finally managed to get out, "Where is all that smoke coming from?"

Billows of it, my friend soon saw, were being generated by several blackened carrots in the bottom of a saucepan on the stove; for it turned out that these were the vegetable matter under scrutiny, and they were suddenly oxidizing at a phenomenal rate. My friend had been leaning over them till now, oblivious to fumes, and so rapt in the wonders of natural mystery that these same carrots had ceased utterly to figure in her mind as part of the family dinner—the reason for their being on the stove in the first place.

"Oh, gosh, Mother!" she said when she came to—or something like that.

This, of course, is about all a girl can say to explain away the schizophrenia that so often splits us when a weak human nature forsakes a lower reality to grope admiringly for a higher. Something has to give, and usually does.

I remember some years ago dashing between trains into a confessional in a big city church and unburdening myself of what I considered a venial sin of intellectual pride. As I recall, I muttered something like, "Bless me, Father, for I let the stew burn while I was trying to figure out the circuminceptions of the Blessed Trinity.

It was the end of a working day, and Father, no doubt about it, had had it. "Now you imitate the Blessed Mother!" he shot at me, adding for good measure, "She knew how to keep her mind where it *belonged!*"

This excellent advice was delivered in unmistakable accents of positively Mosaic indignation. Kitchen theologian, forsooth! Now even Sinai was smoking! It was no use pretending I didn't understand. Evidently my sin had been far more heinous than I ever suspected. Clearly I was a traitor to my vocation as wife and mother, if not to my very womanhood.

Well, it wasn't the first time a penitent had,

... looked for sympathy, but there was none;
for comforters, and ... found none.
Rather they put gall in my food,
and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (*Psalm 68*)

There are lots of forms of Christ-like suffering. Accepting a stiff penance, I pulled my quivering psyche together as best I could and crept from the confessional, thoroughly chastened, nay, oxidized.

"He who hears you, hears Me," the Christ promised his priests.

It remained only for me to take my unknown confessor's advice, if I ever expected to rise from the spiritual quagmire into which I had so deeply, if unwittingly fallen. Having just promised that "with the help of Thy grace I resolve to sin no more, and to avoid all near occasions of sin," I perforce concluded I had better stop thinking about the Blessed Trinity. It was simply too fascinating for a housewife with stew on the stove.

As directed, I began instead dutifully meditating on the life of the Blessed Mother, so I could imitate her at this impasse. Naturally, this entailed figuring out precisely where her mind belonged so I could put mine there too.

"Hail, full of grace," Daughter of the Father!

"The Lord is with thee," Bride of the Logos!

"Blessed art thou among women," Temple and Instrument of the Holy Ghost!

This Lily of the Trinity, who quizzed an angel, then "ran in haste" until she finally *stood* in agony at the foot of the Cross, what did she think about while the stew thickened? Even she, I was sure, could think about stew just so long. A stew is finite; thinking isn't.

Well, to make a short story shorter, it was about two hours and fifteen minutes all told before I was busily cogitating circumincessions of the Blessed Trinity again. Obviously, that was where our Lady's mind belonged, with the rest of her; and so did mine. Didn't God make us for Himself?

Whenever I hear maudlin stories about unsympathetic confessors who supposedly drive their penitents out of the Church by gross lack of sympathy and understanding, I can't help laughing, though of course I shouldn't. It's obvious, however, that those sinners just didn't listen to what Father really said. They forget that Confession is a sacrament whose grace doesn't depend on human foibles, and that all things work for good for those who even try to love God. That apparently tired, crusty, anonymous priest was the agent of what I now know was one of the greatest graces of my life. Wasn't he the Christ? Didn't Christ come to lead us to the Father? Well, that's where he pointed me. No penitent could ask for more.

Almost a decade later, I'm still thinking about the Blessed Trinity; and not possessing the Blessed Virgin's privileges of integrated nature, I still burn an occasional stew, try as I will not to. When I do, however, I've learned to confess a sin against justice, that is, not giving the stew the attention rightfully due it. That's nothing so satanic as intellectual pride, but more in the category of petty thievery, which is terribly humiliating to thinkers of great thoughts. As for actually falling into pride, it's hard to see how speculating on the Blessed Trinity could ever lead to it; the effects are so humbling. As far as I know, the only people who might succumb are those who presume to understand the Trinity and explain It to others. They become formal heretics, poor things, and even so, that takes an awful lot of brains.

A married couple we know once announced gravely at a cocktail party that they had resigned their membership in the Protestant church they attended in order to become Unitarians. In the course of the evening I had occasion to ask the wife what had prompted this move. (I knew her to have descended from a long line of Presbyterian divines!) Her answer was—and I quote: “Ed and I finally came to the conclusion that we just couldn't swallow the Trinity!”

I could have told her we swallow the Blessed Trinity without any trouble at all every time we receive Holy Communion, but I knew, of course, what she meant. What could I say? I had to come clean and admit I couldn't either.

Looking back over our conversation, I see now that my friend may be actually closer to the truth than she ever was before, though to all appearances traveling in the opposite direction. She admits, bless her heart, that her mind can't comprehend the Blessed Trinity. Lots of people never get that far. Her only mistake is assuming it follows that the Blessed Trinity doesn't exist. This, please God, is merely an error in logic which can be remedied whenever she so desires.

It takes a long time for some people to perceive that, whereas natural education inevitably adds to the store of what it knows, supernatural education seems only to add to what it doesn't know. Certainly the more you think about God, the smaller and more ignorant you see yourself to be. After this kind of mental exercise any housewife can say with Dr. Carl Jung, "I'm not a bit taken in by intellectuals—I'm one myself, you know!"

It doesn't take a psychiatrist to see that every human being is an intellectual by his very nature as a rational animal. He can't help trying to swallow the Blessed Trinity, because he was made by the Blessed Trinity to keep trying. This is his eternal destiny.

Believe it or not, even women think. Eve did. Don't we smell something burning? This time, I'm afraid it's hell. Eve was the first lady intellectual simply because she was the first lady. She wanted to know the mystery of good and evil and "be like God," so it's easy to see why my unknown confessor had qualms. Eve thought the whole matter over, talked it out with the devil, and judging the fruit not only pretty and tasty, but "desirable for the knowledge it would give," she ate it.

Her sin didn't lie in her thirst for knowledge. This was God-given and legitimate, an integral part of her nature. Her sin consisted in satisfying her craving in her own way, contrary to God's injunction. You know the rest, but we can't stop here, because we would be left with a terribly distorted view of the female intellect and its role in the world.

We might turn instead to the Queen of Saba. She's a real bluestocking and a delightful character, who was so enamored of wisdom she traveled many miles "having heard of the fame of Solomon ... to try him with hard questions. And entering into Jerusalem with a great train ... (she) spoke to him all that she had in her heart," just as a woman would.

She was terribly taken with Solomon, who had an answer for everything. To express her admiration she gave "a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices a very great store, and precious stones." Scripture adds, "There was brought no more such abundance as these which the Queen of Saba gave to King Solomon" (*III Kings 10:1,2,10*). We are also told that "King Solomon gave the Queen of Saba all that she desired, and asked of him: besides what he offered her of himself of his royal bounty" (*III Kings 10:12-13*).

Our Lord, the new Solomon, approved the wisdom-seeking queen as wholeheartedly as did His ancestor. Holding her up as an example against the pedantry of the Pharisees, He promised that "the Queen of

the South will rise up in judgment with this generation and will condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here!” (*Matt. 12:42*). He admired virtuous female curiosity, and said so.

Next to the Christ, the blessed housewife Mary is the greatest intellectual the world has ever known, her capacity for knowledge only faintly foreshadowed by Eve’s and the Queen of Saba’s. Because she was “full of grace,” her mind’s eye was utterly simple and perfectly enlightened, though like us she lived on earth through faith. We can be certain she kept her mind exactly where it belonged—in God—ever seeking humbly to penetrate the abyss of His wisdom.

“As it is not good for a man to eat much honey, so he that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory,” warns Proverbs, such rich Food is God for the human mind.

Who is so overwhelmed with glory as this Woman, clothed with the Sun, who searched Majesty all her earthly life and searches It even now in Heaven? No wife and mother can imitate her without imitating her intellectual life, a life with God, which is not merely a meeting of hearts in love, but a meeting of minds in light. Saint Augustine doesn’t hesitate to say, “Mary conceived first with her mind and then with her body” (*Sermo, 215, 4*).

At the Angelic Salutation in Nazareth, she “kept pondering what manner of greeting this might be,” and after the Annunciation inquires, “How shall this happen, since I do not know man?” And like the Queen of Saba, she is told “all she desired and asked of him,” for the angel answers to her satisfaction, closing with the words, “For nothing shall be impossible with God.”

“For everyone who asks, receives,” promises her Son, putting His seal on this sort of inquiry. Ask, and you shall receive; search majesty and faint with the honey of it.

Had the Christ never come, we could dispense with thinking about the Blessed Trinity. Natural humanity is perfectly satisfied with the God who is One, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, eternal, and whose existence can in fact be proved by five arguments from reason. Millions and millions of housewives have known no other and may have led good natural lives in His sight notwithstanding. Our Blessed Lady as a girl knew God this way, for she considered herself His handmaid at the time, as she candidly admitted to the Angel.

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord!” she said.

“But I,” says the Christ to us, “have called you friends!” as St. John reported later. “No longer do I call you servants (or handmaids), because the servant does not know what his master does. But I have

called you friends,” He insists, “because all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you!”

This Man made known to us that God is Three as well as One. He had to tell us, because at Mary’s fiat He caught us up forever into His triune life. At the risk of burning the stew a thousand times, we’ll have to think about this cataclysmic elevation. I, for one, can’t get over it. This is the Mystery of mysteries, utterly beyond all demonstrations from reason, but necessary to supernaturalized human intelligence if it is to achieve its new destiny. That’s why God told us.

Now, what’s tellable about the Blessed Trinity is soon said. In his famous Creed, St. Athanasius puts it very grandly, very insistently, drawing us into the abyss by the majestic simplicity of his language:

Now this is the Catholic faith: that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity; neither confusing the persons nor distinguishing the nature. The person of the Father is distinct; the person of the Son is distinct; the person of the Holy Spirit is distinct. Yet the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit possess one Godhead, equal glory, and co-eternal majesty. As the Father is, so is the Son, so also is the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated. The Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, the Holy Spirit is infinite. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. Nevertheless, there are not three eternals, but One eternal; even as they are not three uncreateds, or three infinites, but One uncreated, and one Infinite. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty. And yet there are not three almighties, but one Almighty. So also the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. And yet, there are not three Gods, but only one God. So too the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. And still there are not three Lords, but only one Lord. For just as we are compelled by Christian truth to profess that each person is individually God and Lord, so also are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to hold that there are three Gods or Lords. The Father was made by no one, being neither created nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, though not created or made, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, though neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding. Consequently there is one Father, not three Fathers; there is one Son, not three Sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. Furthermore, in this Trinity there is no “before” or “after,” no “greater” or “less”: for all three Persons are co-eternal and coequal. In every respect, therefore, as has already been stated, unity must be worshipped in Trinity, and Trinity in unity. This is what everyone who wishes to be saved must hold regarding the Blessed Trinity. (From the *Breviary*, Lesson for Trinity Sunday.)

On the face of it, this definition proves that somebody has done a great deal of thinking about God, because all it contains is by no means self-evident in the Gospels, the source of its revelation. Early theologians were not even sure, for instance, whether the Holy Spirit was truly a distinct Person, or simply a very high form of grace. The Greek Church still doesn't concede that the Holy Spirit proceeds equally from the Father and the Son. To this day there's no "filioque" in their creed.

St. Teresa reports in her *Autobiography* that once while reciting St. Athanasius' Creed,

I was given to understand the mystery of One God and Three Persons with so much clearness, that I was greatly astonished and consoled at the same time. This was of the greatest help to me, for it enabled me to know more of the greatness and marvels of God; and when I think of the most Holy Trinity, or hear It spoken of, I seem to understand the mystery, and a great joy it is (xxxix, 36).

Well, it's no use pretending. All the stews I've scorched to date don't add up to anything like that. If you want to see the Blessed Trinity as I do, you'll have to lower your sights considerably. St. Augustine defines education as learning from others, but as I see it, this doesn't always mean other people. Material nature is "other" too, and everything outside us unfolds God's glory to the human intellect. Unknowable outside revelation, the Blessed Trinity is reproduced nowhere in natural creation, yet its "vestiges" are refracted everywhere, tantalizing us constantly, once we're in the know.

The best place to start pondering the Blessed Trinity is any place, doing whatever you're doing.

"Look, child," I found myself telling one of our struggling schoolboys here, "parsing sentences isn't as hard as you make out. Just look for the Blessed Trinity. It's in everything."

"In sentences?"

"Certainly. Find the Subject, the Verb and the Object—doer, doing, done. You'll find everything else in the sentence just hangs on them."

"Everything?"

"Every sentence works the same. *Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over the kerosene lamp, starting the Chicago fire.* Cow, kicked, lamp. See?"

"Oh," he said, and believe it or not, his English grades improved. But why shouldn't they? God created grammar.

St. Jerome once wrote to his friend Pammachius that in the case of Holy Scripture even the syntax contains a mystery. Still awed by the

divine mystery in the least inspired sentence in the newspaper, I find the saint's comment a masterpiece of understatement. He must have been talking down to Pammachius, I've decided.

Even as a benighted unbeliever I used to be amazed at the way home decorating problems could be resolved by judiciously grouping recalcitrant objects in threes. One object with two others in close relation to the first proved especially good, as, say, a table flanked by two chairs; or a vase, an ashtray and a statuette on a coffee table. Add a second ashtray and the effect was ruined. Four of anything rarely seemed to work, and when it did, the effect was generally fat, full, and now no more. Five was fine, because three could easily be discerned in relation to the other two. Same with seven, and so on. Three proved invariably interesting, a natural nucleus for any further subsidiary combinations. It could be added to indefinitely, in what I know now is a pale vestigial reflection of Triune fecundity.

Please don't take my word for this. Try it yourself, if you haven't already. I found it positively irritating never to be able to depart from my formula without settling for second best, but finally I gave up, concluding it must be naturally satisfying to see the arrangements of the parts of the human body reproduced in the house the body occupied. You know, torso flanked by two arms, one nose with two eyes, one head with two ears, and so on. Poor atheists, they must be satisfied with small truths! Not that I had stumbled over anything new. The mysterious fitness of "threes" has bewitched mankind since thinking began. It's as inescapable to the notice of the garbage collector as it is to that of the scientist or the philosopher.

The garbage man knows firsthand that fruits and vegetables all have three parts: peel, pulp, and seed. The youngest scientist can see that a tree has root, trunk, and branch, and that all living things go through a cycle of birth, growth, and decay—in a visible creation which is animal, vegetable, and mineral. Matter itself can be gas, liquid, or solid, and solids must have length, breadth, and thickness. Anybody knows there's a past, present, and future, and that you can move up, down, or across through air, water, or earth, not to mention swallowing blarney hook, line, and sinker.

Certainly a housewife can't overlook the fact that rooms are composed of ceiling, walls, and floor. She must know, too, that any stool must have at least three legs if it's to stand without help. Doing spiritual reading in the mail order catalogue, she can contemplate any amount of merchandise in sizes small, medium, and large—in grades good, better, and best. Like Goldilocks stumbling into the abode of the three bears, she soon recognizes that housekeeping without reference to

the Blessed Trinity is utterly impossible. Any porridge is either cold, tepid, or hot; chairs little, middle-sized, or big; and mattresses tend to be soft, hard, or “just right.”

And I guess I know who Goldilocks is, all right. Don’t let her fool you. She’s really Aristotle in a blond wig, preaching his golden mean to the small fry, exploring the house of the Three Bears by sipping their porridge, sitting in their chairs, and sleeping in their beds. Natural ethics is just as trinitarian as everything else and finds even the lowliest virtue always exactly midway between two extremes.

This didn’t escape St. Augustine, who found vestiges of the Trinity in classical philosophy, which he notes is natural, rational, and moral:

Not that I would conclude that these philosophers, in this threefold division, had any thought of a trinity in God, although Plato is said to have been the first to discover and promulgate this distribution, and he saw that God alone could be the author of nature, the bestower of intelligence, and the kindler of love by which life becomes good and blessed ... There are three things which every artificer must possess if he is to effect anything—nature, education, practice. Nature is to be judged by capacity, education by knowledge, practice by its fruit (*City of God*, Bk. xl, 25).

St. Augustine no doubt also saw that man by his very nature craves unity, truth, and goodness, whom God sustains by creation, conservation, and concurrence, as scholastic philosophy tells us. I understand that in his teens St. Aloysius Gonzaga once accepted an invitation at Alcala to argue in public debate that the Blessed Trinity can be known through human intelligence alone. I would have loved to have been there!

In the spiritual world, the rule of three can be discerned ever more truly, the closer we approach the Godhead. Among angels, St. Thomas tells us, there are three hierarchies. Among men, God’s chosen people were first distinguished carnally as Cohen, Levite, and Israel. Now become the Church, they subsist as priesthood, religious, and laity. Indeed God’s entire plan for us unfolds in a threefold manner by way of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification, reflected liturgically in the seasons of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

Our Lord died on a wooden symbol of the Trinity, his name fastened to the top in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. If we follow these apparently contrived little details any distance at all in the human life of Jesus, however, we soon see that every action of His was in fact a trinitarian operation in flesh, in some cases so revealed to the senses of the bystanders. One such was His baptism, when the Father

was heard to speak, and the Holy Spirit was manifested by the visible sign of a dove.

O Emmanuel, God-with-Us! At His Death, Resurrection and Ascension—again a threefold action—all “vestiges” follow humanity’s elevation into the Trinity Itself. In this triune Life, the Christian now lives and breathes, whether he likes it or not. His virtues are become inestimable—as also his sins.

This being the case, we may sometimes wonder why God waited so long to reveal the mystery of the Trinity to us. Few Christian wives and mothers could fail to see that the human family, composed of father, mother, and child, forms a particularly powerful vestige of the Trinity. Indeed the human family is so strongly reminiscent of the Trinity, it leads us to see at once one very good reason why God in His infinite wisdom didn’t disclose His treble identity to the early Hebrews, as we feel He might have.

The Jews lived their early history surrounded by polytheistic pagans whose myths, like everything created, reflected the Trinity vestigially. Their plural deities were in fact for the most part god “families.” The Sumerians, for instance, had a father-god called *An* and a mother-goddess *Ki*, who united to give birth to *En-lil*, and this trinity was repeated in varied form throughout Babylonia, Assyria and Egypt. The same was true in Chanaan, where Baal played the part of *En-lil*, *Astarte* was the mother, and *El* the father. As we know, the Hebrew prophets spent most of their time and risked their lives, trying to keep the chosen people from adhering to these fakes. Had God seen fit at this time to reveal Himself as three Persons to such a nation, surrounded by so many spurious trinities, surely the truth would have degenerated into little more than just another myth among others. The reason why God doesn’t reveal Himself fully to us is, therefore, always the same anywhere or anytime: we aren’t ready for it!

Nevertheless, many family trios in the Old Testament may be in fact trinitarian figures. The Siblings, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, perhaps fall into this category on close examination. Abraham, Sara, and Isaac certainly do, and foreshadow unmistakably the Holy Family of Nazareth—this last the most perfect representation of the Trinity ever produced in flesh, inasmuch as it is a truly supernatural representation, and one of its members was the Second Person himself.

With the hindsight we now have, we can see that God did actually fill the Old Testament with literally hundreds of luminous clues to the great mystery; but for the Jews it was veiled as was the face of Moses, and as St. Paul laments, it continues so to this day. We Christians, on the other hand, “with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory

of the Lord” (*II Cor. 3:18*), can see that the Lord God in Eden who says of Adam, “The man has become one of *Us*,” was speaking the plainest truth.

Abraham “by the terebinths of *Mamre* as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day” was visited by three strangers whom he nevertheless addressed as “my Lord,” and who foretold to him the birth of Isaac. Abraham, we know now, had rare insight. So, too, Isaias is granted a sublime vision of the One God who is nonetheless pronounced thrice Holy by the heavenly court. Passing by these more obvious examples, we might turn to the Book of Josue, where there occurs the following well-known story:

Then Josue, son of Nun, secretly sent out two spies from Sattim, saying, “Go, reconnoiter the land and Jericho.” When the two reached Jericho, they went into the house of a harlot named Rahab, where they lodged. But a report was brought to the king of Jericho that some Israelites had come there that night to spy out the land. So the king of Jericho sent Rahab the order, “Put out the visitors who have entered your house, for they have come to spy out the entire land.” The woman had taken the two men and hidden them, so she said, “True, the men you speak of came to me, but I did not know where they came from. At dark, when it was time for the gate to be shut, they left and I do not know where they went. You will have to pursue them immediately to overtake them.” Now she had led them to the roof, and hidden them among her stalks of flax spread out there. But the pursuers set out along the way to the fords of the Jordan, and once they had left, the gate was shut.

Before the spies fell asleep, Rahab came to them on the roof and said: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, that a dread of you has come upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are overcome with fear of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and how you dealt with Sehon and Og, the two kings of the Amorrites beyond the Jordan, whom you doomed to destruction. At these reports, we are disheartened; everyone is discouraged because of you, since the Lord, your God, is God in heaven above and on earth below. Now then, swear to me by the Lord that since I am showing kindness to you, you in turn will show kindness to my family; and give me an unmistakable token that you are to spare my father and mother, brothers and sisters, and all their kin, and save us from death.” “We pledge our lives for yours,” the men answered her. “If you do not betray this errand of ours, we will be faithful in showing kindness to you when the Lord gives us the land.”

Then she let them down through the window with a rope; for she lived in a house built into the city wall. “Go up into the hill country,” she suggested to them, “that your pursuers may not find you. Hide there for three days, until they return; then you may proceed on your way.” The

men answered her, "This is how we will fulfill the oath you made us take: When we come into the land, tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you are letting us down; and gather your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. Should any of them pass outside the doors of your house, he will be responsible for his own death, and we shall be guiltless. But we shall be responsible if anyone in the house with you is harmed. If, however, you betray this errand of ours, we shall be quit of the oath you have made us take." Let it be as you say," she replied, and bade them farewell. When they were gone, she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

They went up into the hills, where they stayed three days until their pursuers, who had sought them all along the road without finding them, returned. Then the two came back down from the hills, crossed the Jordan to Josue, son of Nun, and reported all that had befallen them. They assured Josue, "The Lord has delivered all this land into our power; indeed, all the inhabitants of the land are overcome with fear of us" (*Josue 2:1-24*).

Those whose faces are unveiled soon may suspect that we have here not only a good story, but a miniature allegory of the triune God's plan for the salvation of mankind. Here a figure of God the Father, Josue "sends" the Son and the Holy Spirit as two "spies" to reconnoiter the fallen world. They are harbored by the sinful elect in the person of Rahab, who, nevertheless, believes and hides them on her "roof." (The roof in Scripture is often a figure of the higher intellect, where faith abides.)

Before disappearing out the window to elude their pursuers for "three days," the men give Rahab a pledge in the form of a red cord to be tied at her window. Recalling the blood of the sacrificial lamb put on the doorposts of Egypt, this can certainly be taken as a figure of the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. Eventually returning to Josue (God the Father), the two announce that conquest is certain, that "all the inhabitants are overcome with fear of us." At the destruction of Jericho, Rahab the elect is spared together with all her kin precisely because she "hath hidden the messengers."

Thus interpreted, this is the story of the Church and of every redeemed soul who willingly harbors the Son and the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends within human souls to establish His Kingdom. Trying to fathom this story to the bottom in all its details would be like trying to swallow the Blessed Trinity, but even this much betrays the rich trinitarian content latent in Scripture.

While we're on the subject, St. Teresa says elsewhere in her *Autobiography*:

I was once recollected in that companionship which I have ever in my soul, and it seemed to me that God was present there in such a way that I remembered how St. Peter said: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”; for the living God was in my soul. This is not like other visions, for it overpowers faith; so that it is impossible to doubt of the indwelling of the Trinity in our souls, by presence, power, and essence. To know this truth is of the very highest gain; and, as I stood amazed to see His Majesty in a thing so vile as my soul, I heard: “It is not vile, My child, for it is made in My image” (*Relation ix*, 17).

And with that, we fall headlong into the vortex of the mystery which lies within us, for in the interior world of the human soul, the vestiges of the Blessed Trinity which teem in the natural world intensify and come to a point like rays of light concentrated by a high-powered lens:

God created man in His image.
In the image of God He created him.
Male and female He created them (*Gen. 1:27*).

Who in his right mind could ever have suspected such a thing? That only God could have revealed us this, our most intimate secret, proves we don't know the first thing about ourselves. How are we like God? Inasmuch as generations of acute theologians have so far been unable to provide us with any kind of clear definition on this important question, please don't expect an explanation from me off-hand.

Properly awed by the magnitude of the problem, I can only accept that women are made to God's image as well as men. It's evident they must search Majesty for their own answers within themselves, as St. Teresa did. It's true she was granted special visions of what took place in her soul, but we are possessed of the reality they portrayed no less than she, each to her own degree. It remains that no woman made to God's image can know herself without knowing God—nor can she know God without knowing something of herself. If this reciprocity didn't exist, the interior life would be just the hollow, self-centered mockery the world judges it to be.

St. Teresa, taught by our Lord, rhymed the poem:

Soul, thou must seek thyself in me,
And thou must seek for me in thee.

As it is, those who try know it's a dangerous, vital, exhilarating business. "Search not into things above thy ability," warns Sirach. Many would argue it's safer and humbler to follow his advice and let well enough alone, "For it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes those things that are hid" (3:23). Unfortunately, Sirach qualifies this easy way out. He adds, "But the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always!" (3:22).

That's the trouble. We have to search Majesty. God tells natural man as He did Father Abraham, to "walk in my presence and be perfect." This calls forth the full limit of natural human capacity, living in God's "presence," though not in His intimacy. To Moses God explains why man made in His image must be a perfect man: "For I, the Lord your God, am holy!" (*Lev. 19:1*). This is enough, but the Christ, who made gods of us, tells us to be perfect, not as man can be perfect, but "*as your heavenly Father is perfect!*" Who but God could set such standards, or establish such a relationship? We are commanded to measure ourselves against divinity!

This is awful. Who can imitate what isn't known? Obviously this is impossible. Lest we use this excuse against Him, God the Son, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man so that triune Divinity might be made plain to us.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world; who, being the brightness of his glory and the image of his substance, and upholding of all things by the word of his power, has effected man's purgation from sin and taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on High (*Heb. 1:1-3*).

Theologians in the tradition of Duns Scotus are of the opinion that, if Adam and Eve had never sinned and never needed a redeemer, God would, nevertheless, have become Man, if only to supply them a visible model of fully developed human perfection. Such a model would be indispensable if man were to achieve a supernatural end within the intimate life of God. We might also argue, didn't God make man in His image precisely because God intended to become man? St. Francis de Sales, Suarez, St. Albert the Great, and many mystics were of the opinion that from the beginning, the Incarnation was the true motive for creating the universe. Otherwise, they contend, why would Christ be Head of the angels, who could in no wise profit by redemption?

Without the divine Model, who could know on the human level how to be as *poor* as God, who empties Himself eternally as an outpouring of Persons? The person who became man “did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to but emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men,” so that He might pour Himself out on earth to the last drop of His blood, divested even of His material clothing, in order to teach us the poverty of God.

We must know God, to be as *chaste* as God is chaste, who is thrice-holy, yet ever One, outside of Whom nothing is, and who as Man asked, “Which of you can convict me of sin?” (*John 8:46*).

Only God can teach us to be as *obedient* as God is obedient. The servant of all His creation, He rains on just and unjust alike, sustaining all things by His power and Love. As Man He washed the feet of other men, doing always the will of the Father and becoming “obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross,” coming, “not to be served, but to serve.”

“Be you, therefore, imitators of God,” said St. Paul, who understood all this so well. “And walk in love, as Christ also loved us and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor” (*Eph. 5:1,2*).

“For I have given you an example,” He told them in farewell, “that as I have done to you, so you also should do” (*John 13:15*), and He left to prepare for each of us a place in the bosom of the Trinity. We must know God to understand why poverty, chastity, and obedience perfect faith, hope, and charity, and why these theological virtues are three which lead us to the Trinity by enlightening our minds, cleansing our memories, and strengthening our wills. By them we overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil, for even evil—which is *nothing*—must be so in a trinitarian way to oppose a trinitarian God.

Even under the Old Dispensation, God commanded us to love Him “with thy whole heart, thy whole soul and thy whole mind,” as the price of being His own special possession. There’s a noble congruity in loving a trinitarian God three ways, with heart, soul, and mind. I wonder, are we, like God, trinitarians? If we’re made in His image, we must be, both naturally and supernaturally.

Like God, we are mostly hidden, especially from ourselves, but like Him we also produce certain “vestiges.” For instance, when a housewife possessing mind, memory, and free will thinks of herself thinking, and takes pleasure in the thought, she re-enacts within herself to some extent the very circuminceptions I burnt the stew over. “God himself is a spirit,” reminds theology, “and the manner of divine generation is entirely spiritual. It is an act of the divine intellect. God

the Father understands. There is nothing for Him to know or understand, except Himself. We can distinguish, therefore, the Thinker and the Thought-Of.”

God the Father, if you like, sees Himself reflected in the mirror of His mind. It is the perfect image of Himself that He sees, One “Who is the radiance of His Father’s splendor, and the full expression of His being” (*Heb. 1:3*). That image is His Son. We, too, having a mind that is spiritual, can think of ourselves. We have the beginnings of the trinitarian operations, but they are merely inchoate; they do not carry to completion: the contemplated image of self never becomes a distinct person that is other than self.

Walter Hilton, also a mystic like St. Teresa, puts it another way:

The soul of man, is a life with three powers—memory, understanding, and will—made in the image and likeness of the Blessed Trinity, whole, perfect, and righteous. The *memory* has the likeness of the Father inasmuch as it was given power to retain His image, neither forgetting it nor being distracted by creatures. The *understanding* was made clear and bright without error or darkness, as perfect as it might be in a body not glorified and so it has the likeness of the Son, who is eternal Wisdom. The *will* was made pure, springing up to God without love of the flesh or of creatures, by the sovereign goodness of the Holy Ghost, and so it has the likeness of the Holy Ghost, who is divine Love.

So man’s soul, which may be called a created trinity, was perfected in the memory, sight, and love of the uncreated Blessed Trinity, which is God ... But when Adam sinned, choosing to squander his love on himself and creatures and to take pleasure in them, he lost all his nobility and dignity, and you also in him, and he fell from the blessed Trinity into a horrible, dark, wretched trinity; that is, into forgetfulness and ignorance of God, and into a monstrous love of himself. (*Scale of Perfection*, Bk. II, Ch. 43.)

Hilton sums up the whole of the spiritual life in a desire “to recover a semblance of that dignity; that our soul may be restored by grace, as it were, to a shadow of that image of the Trinity, which it originally possessed, and which it will have in its fullness in heaven” (*Scala*, Bk. I, 42).

“The Trinity so loves to find Its own image and likeness in Its creation!” exclaimed Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, the modern apostle of the Divine Indwelling.

St. Augustine pronounced no endeavor so arduous or so rewarding as meditation on the Blessed Trinity, which will engage our minds, memories, and will for eternity.

“O eternal Trinity, you are a deep sea,” cried also St. Catherine of Siena, “into which the deeper I enter, the more I find; the more I find, the more I seek!”

Because the Blessed Trinity is an indemonstrable, fully supernatural mystery, it gives itself to us only supernaturally, and *really*. It’s no hobby for spiritual dilettantes. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and buried in three measures of flour, until all of it was leavened” (*Matt. 13:33*), said the Second Person, who is all textbooks in one Word. When Christ the leaven, which Holy Mother the Church “took and buried” in our “three measures of flour”—our own trinitarian image—begins His work there, we can expect to rise to unprecedented heights. Because we are corporeal, we inevitably come to reflect and participate in—each to her own degree—the perfect divine life lived in flesh by God on earth. “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God!” says St. Paul (*I Cor. 10:31*).

Dishwashing? Well, “whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” says the Apostle, and as I remember, the Lord Jesus was very particular about both the inside and the outside of the cup being clean, so washing dishes can’t be unimportant. Besides, there is a special reward in eternity for dishpan hands. Our Lord promised St. Gertrude that “in the Resurrection, when the body will be raised incorruptible, each of its members will receive a special recompense for the labors and actions which it has performed in My name and for My love.”

“O Lord, show me some way whereby I may bear this life!” groaned St. Teresa, like many another woman who yearned to chuck it all and take off for heaven.

And our Lord replied, “Think, My child, when life is over, thou canst not serve Me as thou art serving Me now, and eat for me, and sleep for me. Whatsoever thou doest, let it be done for Me as if thou wert no longer living, but I; for that is what St. Paul said.”

Dishwashing in Christ and the Blessed Trinity isn’t all done in the head, like simple arithmetic. In fact, St. Thomas wouldn’t allow that even simple arithmetic can be done entirely in the head. Following Aristotle, he says, “It is as ridiculous to say, the soul alone understands, as to say, alone it builds or weaves.”

Elaborating for us in modern idiom, Fr. Sertillanges says:

Thought is born in us after long processes of preparation in which the whole bodily machine is at work. The chemistry of the cell is the basis of everything; the most obscure sensations prepare our experience; this experience is the product of the work of the senses, which slowly elaborate their acquisitions and fix them through memory. It is amid physiological phenomena, in continuity with them and in dependence on them, that the intellectual operation takes place. No one thinks, even if he is only utilizing an acquired idea, without calling up a whole complex of images, emotions, sensations, which are the culture medium of the idea ... The change by which we pass from ignorance to knowledge must be attributed, according to St. Thomas, directly to the body and only accidentally to the intellectual part of us. (*Intellectual Life*, p. 34).

It's easy to see from that how St. Paul could talk about the Word of God penetrating even into "joints and marrow." It's also easy to see that nobody but a housewife can think as a housewife thinks. Not even a theologian can think about God for her. God's Majesty is to be searched specially by each one of us, because He made each one of us specially to search Him. As we search His Majesty, He searches our hearts, and whoever ponders in her heart finds Him, as did the blessed housewife Mary, Seat of Wisdom, Mother of Good Counsel.

Believe it or not, women are especially good at this pondering business, producing knowledge in love within our souls, as God the Father produces the Son in the Holy Spirit. Men criticize women for thinking with their hearts, but that's the way women are made to think. Because they're built this way, female thinking sometimes sinks to earth but on the other hand, it rarely takes off for the wild blue yonder of impractical theory as male thinking sometimes does. When a woman really thinks, there are practical repercussions: we have two Eves, the old and the new, to prove it. In fact, about all a woman has to worry about is keeping her thinking straight, so reliably does she "do" thought as she goes along. The knowledge and love joined in God, shall man put asunder?

Fiat, said Mary for all of us, thinking it over. I think I smell something burning.

"I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" (*Luke 12:49*).

I guess the kitchen stove is as good a place for fire to start as any.
Here *goes*.