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RICHARD OF ST VICTOR

THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS
THE MYSTICAL ARK
BOOK THREE OF THE TRINITY

TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION
BY
GROVER A. ZINN

PREFACE
BY
JEAN CHÂTILLON



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Cover Art:

The artist LESLIE FLANDERS combines a career in writing and painting. Born in Ohio she presently resides in New York. Of her cover art she says, "I saw Richard as a great mystic of the medieval period but one who because of the timeless quality of his mysticism is thoroughly modern as well. I combined a sense of the artistic forms of his time with those of our present era. . . . Richard's spirituality has everything to do with persons relating to each other and with the persons of the Divine Trinity."



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RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR

For this reason it is easy to give thought to
which ring ought to have which pole.

It ought to be noted that:
The witness of Scripture
pertains to the poles
while human reason
pertains to the rings.

Since the depth of the hidden things goes beyond human reason,
the rings properly receive a place below the crown.

BOOK THREE OF

THE TRINITY

CHAPTER I

That thus far we have treated the unity of the divine substance; hereafter we must inquire what we should hold concerning the plurality of divine persons

In those things which have been said thus far concerning the unity and attributes of the divine substance, we have discussed according to the way it seemed to us. Now for the remainder we have proposed to investigate what we ought to think concerning the plurality and properties of the divine persons.

First of all it seems that we should inquire whether there is true plurality in that true and simple Divinity and if, as we believe, the number of persons appears as a triad. Secondly, we should inquire how the unity of substance can be joined with a plurality of persons. In the third place it will be necessary for us to inquire, according to the teachings of our faith, whether there is only one person there who is from Himself, while each of the others proceeds from another. We should also see if there are other things we should inquire into related to this same consideration. If it should be granted to us to show these things clearly from reason it will finally still be necessary for us to inquire whether if in those two persons who proceed from another, rather than from themselves, there are different modes of preceeding, and which mode is proper to each and what follows in connection with the names of each according to the properties of each.

However, in those things remaining for us to inquire into, it is necessary to apply greater carefulness and to pursue more ardently as we find less in the writings of the Fathers from which we can show these things than from the testimony of reason (I do not speak

of the testimony of Scripture). In connection with the proposal of my investigation, let him who wishes, laugh; let him who wishes mock—and rightly so. For, if I speak truth here, it is not so much knowledge that lifts me up, but rather the ardor of a burning soul that urges me to try this. What if it is not given to me to reach the goal I strive for? What if I falter in running the course? Well, I will rejoice that I totally ran, labored and sweated to the extent of my powers in seeking the face of my Lord. And if it should happen that I fail because of the excessive length, the roughness or difficulty of the way, I will have accomplished something at least, if I may truly say: I have done what I could do; "I have sought and not found him; I have called and he did not answer me" (Song of Songs 5:6). Behold Balaam's ass which delayed her rider on his journey. (Cf. Numbers 22:23–31.) In some mysterious way she impels and urges me to attempt to run the course I have begun. I hear one who still speaks and says to me: "He who could give to me to speak could undoubtedly give it also to you." But now let us turn our attention with all due care to that which we have proposed.

CHAPTER II

How fullness of goodness shows clearly from the nature of charity that in true divinity, plurality of persons cannot be lacking

We have learned above that in that supreme and altogether perfect good there is fullness and perfection of all goodness. However, where there is fullness of all goodness, true and supreme charity cannot be lacking. For nothing is better than charity; nothing is more perfect than charity. However, no one is properly said to have charity on the basis of his own private love of himself. And so it is necessary for love to be directed toward another for it to be charity. Therefore, where a plurality of persons is lacking, charity cannot exist.

But you might say, "Even if there were only one person in that true Divinity, nevertheless He could still have charity toward His creation—indeed He would have it." But certainly He could not have *supreme* charity toward a created person. For charity would be

disordered if He loved supremely someone who should not be supremely loved. But in that supremely wise goodness it is impossible for charity to be disordered. Therefore a divine person could not have supreme charity toward a person who was not worthy of supreme love. However, in order that charity be supreme and supremely perfect, it is necessary that it be so great that nothing greater can exist and that it be of such a kind that nothing better can exist. However, as long as anyone loves no one else as much as he loves himself, that private love which he has for himself shows clearly that he has not yet reached the supreme level of charity. But a divine person certainly would not have anyone to love as worthily as Himself if He did not have a person of equal worth. However a person who is not God would not be equal in worth to a divine person. Therefore, so that fullness of charity might have a place in that true Divinity, it is necessary that a divine person not lack a relationship with an equally worthy person, who is, for this reason, divine.

Therefore see how easily reason clearly shows that in true Divinity plurality of persons cannot be lacking. Certainly God alone is supremely good. Therefore God alone ought to be loved supremely. A divine person could not show supreme love to a person who lacked divinity. However, fullness of Divinity could not exist without fullness of goodness. But fullness of goodness could not exist without fullness of charity, nor could fullness of charity exist without a plurality of divine persons.

CHAPTER III

That the fullness of divine happiness confirms what the fullness of goodness says concerning the plurality of divine persons

What the fullness of goodness clearly shows and proves concerning the plurality of persons, the fullness of happiness demonstrates by a similar reason. What one says, the other confirms. In one and the same confirmation of truth, the one speaks out and the other applauds.

Let each person examine his consciousness; without doubt and

without contradiction he will discover that just as nothing is better than charity, so nothing is more pleasing than charity. Nature herself teaches us this; many experiences do the very same. Therefore, just as that than which nothing is better cannot be lacking in the fullness of true goodness, so also that than which nothing is more pleasing cannot be lacking in the fullness of supreme happiness.* Therefore, in supreme happiness it is necessary that charity not be lacking. However, so that charity may be in the supreme good, it is impossible that there be lacking either one who can show charity or one to whom charity can be shown. However it is a characteristic of love, and one without which it cannot possibly exist, to wish to be loved much by the one whom you love much. Therefore, love cannot be pleasing if it is not also mutual. Therefore, in that true and supreme happiness, just as pleasing love cannot be lacking, so mutual love cannot be lacking. However, in mutual love it is absolutely necessary that there be both one who gives love and one who returns love. Therefore one will be the offerer of love and the other the returner of love. Now, where the one and the other are clearly shown to exist, true plurality is discovered. In that fullness of true happiness, a plurality of persons cannot be lacking. However it is agreed that supreme happiness is nothing other than Divinity itself. Therefore, the showing of love freely given and the repayment of love that is due prove without any doubt that in true Divinity a plurality of persons cannot be lacking.

CHAPTER IV

That what is asserted in the above-mentioned two witnesses concerning the plurality of persons is confirmed by considering the fullness of divine glory

Certainly if we say that in that true Divinity there exists only one person, just as there is only one substance, then without doubt according to this He will not have anyone with whom He could share that infinite abundance of His fullness. But, how can this be, I ask? Would it be because even though He wished to, He could not

*Richard is reflecting the complex formula of Anselm's designation of God in the ontological argument; cf. *Proslogion*, 1-5.

have one who would share with Him? Or is it because He would not wish to, even if He could? But He who is undoubtedly omnipotent cannot be excused on the grounds of impossibility. But could not that which is not due to a defect of power be due to a defect of benevolence alone? But if He would be absolutely unwilling to have one to share with Him when He really could if He wanted, then observe, I ask you, what a defect of benevolence this would be in a divine person and how great it would be. Certainly, as has been said, nothing is sweeter than charity; nothing more pleasing than charity. The life of reason experiences nothing sweeter than the delights of charity; enjoys no pleasure more pleasing than this. He would lack these delights in eternity if He remains all alone on the throne of majesty because He lacks fellowship.

And so from these points we can realize what kind and how great the defect of such benevolence would be if He should prefer to keep for Himself alone in a miserly fashion the abundance of His fullness, which if He wished, He could communicate to another with such an accumulation of joy and such an increase of pleasure. If He were like this, He should quite rightly hide from the gaze of angels and of everyone. If such a great defect of benevolence were in Him, quite rightly He should blush with shame to be seen or to be recognized. But this is not proper! It is not proper that there be something in that supreme majesty in which He could not glory, for which He should not be glorified.

Yet where will fullness of glory be? For no fullness can be lacking there, as was proven above. However, what is more glorious, what is truly more magnificent than to have nothing that one does not want to share? And so it is evident that in that unfailing good and supremely wise counsel there can be no miserly holding back just as there can be no inordinate squandering. Behold, you plainly know, as you can see, that in that supreme and most exalted height, the fullness of glory requires that a sharer of glory be not lacking.

CHAPTER V

That the above-mentioned assertion of divine plurality is confirmed by a triple testimony

Behold, concerning the plurality of divine persons, we have presented our teaching with such transparent reasoning that whoever wishes to oppose such a clear confirmation would seem to suffer from the disease of folly. For who, except someone suffering from the disease of madness, would say that there is lacking in the supreme goodness that than which nothing is more perfect, and nothing better? Who, I ask, except someone weak in mind, would deny that there is in the supreme happiness that than which nothing is more joyful and nothing sweeter? Who, I say, except someone devoid of reason, would think that there could be lacking in the fullness of glory that than which nothing is more glorious and nothing more magnificent? Certainly nothing is better, nothing is more joyful, nothing is any more magnificent than true, sincere and supreme charity, which he knows does not exist without a plurality of persons.

And so the assertion of this plurality is confirmed by a triple testimony. For what supreme goodness and supreme happiness harmoniously declare concerning this matter, fullness of glory applauds by confirming and confirms by applauding. Behold concerning this article of our faith we have a triple testimony: the most supernal concerning supreme things; divine concerning divine things; the deepest concerning profound things; and the most open concerning hidden things. And we know that "in the mouth of two or three witness every word is established" (Matt. 18:16). Behold "a triple cord" that "is difficult to break" (Eccles. 4:12). Through the gift of the Trinity's wisdom, this cord firmly binds any frenzied attackers of our faith.

CHAPTER VI

It is utterly necessary that divine persons exist coeternally

As we can gather clearly from the above, see how the perfection of one person requires fellowship with another. We have discovered that nothing is more glorious, more magnificent than to wish to have nothing that you do not wish to share. And so a person who was supremely good would not wish to be without a sharer of His majesty. However, without doubt, whatever that One whose will was omnipotent willed to exist must exist; whatever that One whose will was unchangeable once willed, He always willed. Therefore, it is necessary that an eternal person have a coeternal person, for one is not able to precede the other nor is one able to follow the other. For just as nothing in that eternal and unchangeable Divinity is able to regress to an earlier condition, so nothing is able to come to a new condition. And so it is utterly impossible for divine persons not to be coeternal. For where there is true Divinity, there supreme goodness and full happiness exist. However, as has been said, supreme goodness cannot exist without perfect charity, nor can perfect charity exist without a plurality of persons. Indeed, full happiness cannot exist without true unchangeability, nor can true unchangeability exist without eternity. True charity demands a plurality of persons; true unchangeability demands a coeternity of persons.

CHAPTER VII

That in that plurality of persons both supreme equality and supreme similitude must exist

Surely it ought to be noted that as true charity demands a plurality of persons, so supreme charity demands equality of persons. Now supreme charity is not yet clearly shown to exist where the beloved is not truly loved supremely. But love is not discerning where one is loved supremely who should not be loved supremely. But in supremely wise goodness, just as the flame of love does not

burn otherwise than supreme wisdom prescribes, so it also does not burn more intensely. And so it is necessary that one who should be loved supremely according to that supreme abundance of charity without doubt should love according to that supreme rule of discretion. But the particular nature of love itself shows clearly that it is not sufficient for the one loving supremely if the one being loved supremely does not return supreme love. And so in mutual love, fullness of charity demands that each be supremely loved by the other and consequently, according to the previously mentioned norm of discretion, that each ought to be loved supremely. However where each ought to be loved equally, it is necessary that each be equally perfect. And so it is necessary that each one be equally powerful, equally wise, equally good, equally blessed. So supreme fullness of love demands supreme equality of perfection in those loved mutually. And so in true Divinity, as the particular nature of charity requires a plurality of persons, so the integrity of the same charity requires supreme equality of persons in true plurality. However, so that the persons may be equal in everything, it is necessary that they be similar in everything. For similitude can be possessed without equality, while equality is never possessed without mutual similitude. How are those persons able to be companions in wisdom who have no similitude in wisdom? However, what I say concerning wisdom, I say concerning power. Indeed, you will find the same in all the others, if you go through them individually.

CHAPTER VIII

According to a marvelous reasoning there is a substantial unity in that plurality and a personal plurality in that true unity of substance

We have sought and discovered that in the above-mentioned mutually loved and mutually loving persons, in order that supreme love might exist worthily, there must be in each both supreme perfection and the fullness of all perfection. And so in each there will be fullness of power, fullness of wisdom, fullness of goodness, fullness of Divinity. Behold, far above we made mention but did

not define something: namely that the Divinity which we discovered could not be common to a plurality of substances; now here it clearly appears to be common to a plurality of persons. But if, as has been said, every perfection is common to those mutually loved, it is clear that if one is omnipotent, the other also will be omnipotent; if one is immeasurable, the other also will be immeasurable; if one is God, the other also will be God.

But as we have demonstrated with sufficient clarity in the above, only one can be omnipotent; only one can be immeasurable; only one can be God. What then? Certainly without any doubt each will be omnipotent in such a way that both together will be only one omnipotent; and each will be immeasurable in such a way that both together will be only one immeasurable; and without doubt each of them will be God in such a way that both together will be only one God.* "And who is fit for this?" (2 Cor. 2:16). But if Divinity itself, as we have said, is certainly common to both, certainly then divine substance will also be common to both; for as has been proved above, divine substance is nothing other than Divinity itself. And so it is shown clearly that each possesses one and the same substance in common—or if this sounds better: It is shown clearly that both are one and the same substance at the same time. And so why marvel if at the same time both are only one omnipotent, one eternal, one immense, only one God and Lord, when certainly both are only one in substance at the same time? Therefore, see how by what a wonderful reasoning there is substantial unity in that plurality of persons and a personal plurality in a true unity of substance, so that there is also "individuality in persons and unity in substance and equality in majesty."†

*Richard is here reflecting the formulation of the *Athanasian Creed*.
†*Athanasian Creed*.

CHAPTER IX

That in the divine nature there is plurality of persons in a unity of substance; and in human nature there is plurality of substances in a unity of person

Perhaps you who hear or read this marvel; you marvel, I say, how there can be more than one person where there is only one substance. But why marvel, why marvel, I say, if He who is marvelous in so many of His works is marvelous in Himself above everything? You marvel at how there is more than one person in the divine nature where there is not more than one substance. Yet you do not marvel equally at how there is more than one substance in human nature where there is not more than one person. For man consists of body and soul, and together these two are only one person. So a person has a basis in himself for how to observe and learn what he should, by way of contrast, think concerning his God.

If it is agreeable, let us gather in one place what reason discovers in the divine nature by reasoning and those things which experience finds in human nature. In both there is unity; in both, plurality. In the divine nature there is unity of substance; in human nature, unity of person. In the former there is plurality of persons; in the latter, plurality of substances. In the former, certainly, plurality of persons in unity of substance; but in the latter, plurality of substances in unity of person. Behold how human nature and divine nature seem to be related mutually yet as opposites, and the one seems to be oriented to the other in a contrasting way. So they are mutually related and should be mutually contrasted: created nature and uncreated nature; time and eternity; corruptible and incorruptible; changeable and unchangeable; the small and the immense; the bounded and the infinite.

CHAPTER X

How from the plurality and unity that he discovers in himself a man is taught what he ought to think, by way of opposites as it were, concerning those things which are proposed to him for believing with respect to his God

Let us add that in the plurality of persons in the divine nature there is full similitude and supreme equality. However, in the plurality of substance in human nature there is much dissimilitude and great inequality. For in the former plurality of persons, one is incorruptible and the other is incorruptible; one is unchangeable and the other is unchangeable; one is unbounded and the other is unbounded; the one and the other are equally powerful; the one and the other are equally wise, equally good, equally blessed. In the latter plurality of substances of which the human person is composed, one is corporeal, the other is incorporeal; one is visible, the other is invisible; one is mortal, the other is immortal; one is destructible, the other is indestructible; one is perishable, the other is imperishable. Nevertheless in the individual person they have been so joined into one that in experiencing and in being delighted with something, they cannot be severed (I do not say separated).

Behold, you have seen how great a dissimilitude and diversity of substances there are in human nature. You have seen, no less, how great a similitude and equality of persons there are in the divine nature. Explain to me, I implore you, how there is personal unity in so great a dissimilitude and diversity of substances, and I will tell you how there is a substantial unity in so great a similitude and equality of persons. You say, "I do not grasp it; I do not understand; but even if the understanding does not grasp it, nevertheless experience itself persuades me." Well said indeed and rightly too! But if experience teaches you that something exists in human nature that is above understanding, should it not also have taught you that something exists above your understanding in divine nature? And so a person can learn from himself, by way of opposites as it were, what he ought to think concerning those things which are proposed to him for believing concerning his God.

These things have been said on account of those who strive to define and determine the depth of divine secrets according to the

mode of their own capacity—not according to the tradition of the holy Fathers, who, as it is known, have learned from and been taught by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER XI

How it is shown clearly from the integrity of charity that true Trinity is in true unity and true unity is in true Trinity

Now let us order what we have grasped; let us follow the mode of our reasoning. A plurality of divine persons has been established but not yet a Trinity of persons. For plurality can exist even where there is no Trinity. Indeed duality itself is plurality. And so, concerning the assertion of Trinity, let us question the same witnesses we brought forth above to testify for plurality.

If it is agreeable, first of all let supreme charity be asked what it testifies about this matter. Now, it is necessary that supreme charity be altogether perfect. Yet in order that it may be supremely perfect, just as it is necessary that it be so great that nothing greater can exist, so it is necessary that it be such that nothing better can exist. For just as in supreme charity what is greatest cannot be lacking, so what is clearly excellent cannot be lacking either. But in true charity, it seems excellent to wish another to be loved as one's self. Certainly in mutual and very fervent love nothing is rarer or more magnificent than to wish that another be loved equally by the one whom you love supremely and by whom you are supremely loved. And so the proof of perfected charity is a willing sharing of the love that has been shown to you. For the one loving supremely and longing to be loved supremely, surely the most excellent joy lies in the fulfillment of his own longing, namely in the attainment of longed-for love. So a person proves that he is not perfect in charity if he cannot yet take pleasure in sharing his excellent joy. And so it is a sign of a great weakness not to be able to allow a sharing of love, while to be able to is a sign of great perfection. If it is great to be able to allow it, it will be greater to undertake it with rejoicing; it will be greatest, however, to search for it with longing. The first is a great good; the second, a better one; but the third, the

best. Therefore, let us offer to the supreme what is excellent; to the best, what is best. And in those who are mutually loved, who were earlier treated above, the perfection of each, in order to be completed, requires with equal reason a sharer of the love that has been shown to them. For if he does not will what perfect goodness demands, where will the fullness of goodness be? If he wills what cannot be done, where will fullness of power be?

Hence we gathered by clear reasoning that the most excellent level of charity, and therefore the fullness of goodness, cannot exist where a defect of will or a defect of a faculty excludes a sharer of love and a sharing of most excellent joy. Therefore it is necessary that each of those loved supremely and loving supremely should search with equal desire for someone who would be mutually loved and with equal concord willingly possess him. Thus you see how the perfection of charity requires a Trinity of persons, without which it is wholly unable to subsist in the integrity of its fullness. Thus, just as integral charity cannot be lacking, so also true Trinity cannot be lacking where everything that is, is altogether perfect. Therefore there is not only a plurality but also true Trinity in true unity and true unity in true Trinity.

CHAPTER XII

How supreme goodness and supreme happiness harmoniously proclaim the Trinity and confirm it by mutual witness

If anyone forcefully affirms that in true Divinity there exist only those whom reason discovered above who are loved mutually, what reason, I ask, will he be able to give for his claim? Will not each of them, I ask, be lacking a sharer in excellent joy? Will this be perhaps because both do not wish to have one, or because one wishes and the other does not? But if one does not wish what the other wishes, where will be that quality which is always found in true and perfect friends—and must always be present? Where, I ask, will be that unique sign of intimate love, namely the unanimity and intimate harmony of souls? And certainly, if anyone says that one wishes and another does not wish, then whoever concedes that

in His will He is not able to prevail denies that He is supremely powerful. But if someone should say that neither is able to find repose in the sharing of the love that has been shown to them, how, I ask, will that person be able to excuse them of the defect of love mentioned above? Now we know that nothing can be hidden from those who are supremely wise. And so if they love each other truly and supremely, how will one of them be able to see a defect in the other and not grieve? For if one of the two sees a defect in the other and does not grieve, where will fullness of love be? If He sees and grieves, where will fullness of happiness be? However, it is the case that where a cause for grieving is never lacking, fullness of happiness cannot exist.

From this, therefore, we gather and grasp by indubitable reasoning that fullness of happiness excludes every defect of charity, whose perfection demands a Trinity of persons, as has been said, and furthermore shows clearly that it cannot be lacking. Behold how supreme goodness and supreme happiness harmoniously proclaim the assertion of Trinity and confirm it with mutual witness.

CHAPTER XIII

That the fullness of divine glory seems to shout out in conclusive witness of supreme goodness and happiness

No doubt, it is a great defect of mature charity to be unable to experience the fellowship of love. Who does not know this or who can cover it over? And so, if this defect mutually exists in those lovers often mentioned before, each not only has something to grieve over in the other, but at the same time something to be ashamed of in himself. For just as a true and intimate friend cannot see the defect of one who is loved intimately and not grieve, so surely in the presence of a friend he cannot fail to be ashamed over his own defect. But if there exists in that plurality of persons something of which one should rightly be ashamed, where, I beg you, will the fullness of glory be, which it is completely impossible to be without in true Divinity? But just as in supreme happiness there

cannot be a cause of grieving, so in the fullness of supreme glory there cannot be matter for embarrassment. Indeed, who does not see what extreme madness it would be to suspect even weakly that there could be something in that supremely happy majesty which could overcloud even in the least the splendor of so much glory?

Behold how the fullness of divine goodness and the fullness of happiness and glory come together in one witness to truth. They clearly demonstrate what ought to be thought concerning the fullness of divine charity in that plurality of persons. Together, they condemn suspicion of any defect in that supreme charity; in accord they proclaim the fullness of all perfection. In order for charity to be true, it demands a plurality of persons; in order for charity to be perfected, it requires a Trinity of persons.

CHAPTER XIV

That a sharing of love cannot exist at all among less than three persons

However, if we concede that we cannot doubt after so many reasons have been set before us; if, I say, we concede that there exists in true Divinity some one person of such great benevolence that He wishes to have no riches or delights that He does not wish to share; of such great power that nothing is impossible for Him; of such great happiness that nothing is difficult for Him—it follows that it is necessary to acknowledge that a Trinity of divine persons cannot fail to exist. But so that this may be more apparent, let us gather into a unity what we have said more diffusely.

Certainly if there were only one person in Divinity, He would not have anyone with whom He might share the riches of His greatness. But conversely that abundance of delights and sweetness, which would have been able to increase for him on account of intimate love, would be lacking in eternity. But fullness of goodness does not allow the supremely good One to retain those riches greedily, nor does fullness of beatitude permit the supremely blessed One to fail to possess an abundance of delights and sweetness. And for the magnificence of His honor, He rejoices over sharing the riches as much as He glories over enjoying the abundance of de-

lights and sweetness. On the basis of these things, consider how impossible it is for some one person in Divinity to lack the fellowship of association. If He were to have only one partner, certainly He would not lack one with whom He might share the riches of His greatness. But He would not have anyone with whom He might share the delights of charity. Nothing can be discovered that gives more pleasure than the sweetness of loving; there is nothing by which the soul is more delighted. He alone possesses the sweetness of such delights who has a partner and a loved one in the love that has been shown to Him.

And so sharing of love cannot exist among any less than three persons. Now, as has been said, nothing is more glorious, nothing more magnificent, than to share in common whatever you have that is useful and pleasant. But this cannot be hidden from supreme wisdom, nor can it fail to be pleasing to supreme benevolence. And as the happiness of the supremely powerful One and the power of supremely happy One cannot be lacking in what pleases Him, so in Divinity it is impossible for two persons not to be united to a third.

CHAPTER XV

That it is necessary for a pair of persons in the divinity to seek out a third person with equal desire and for a similar reason

Surely it ought to be noted in the divine persons that the perfection of one demands the addition of another and consequently in a pair of persons the perfection of each requires union with a third. For in a pair of persons, just as we have said elsewhere, in order that each may properly be supremely loved by the other, it is necessary that each be supremely perfect. And so, just as there is one wisdom and one power for both, so it is surely necessary that there be one supreme benevolence for both. Now it is a special characteristic of supreme and totally perfect benevolence that it shares in common the entire abundance of its fullness for everyone. However, where equal benevolence exists in either person it is necessary that each with equal desire and for a similar reason should seek out a sharer of his excellent joy. For when two

persons who mutually love embrace each other with supreme longing and take supreme delight in each other's love, then the supreme joy of the first is in intimate love of the second, and conversely the excellent joy of the second is in love of the first. As long as only the first is loved by the second, he alone seems to possess the delights of his excellent sweetness. Similarly, as long as the second does not have someone who shares in love for a third,* he lacks the sharing of excellent joy. In order that both may be able to share delights of that kind, it is necessary for them to have someone who shares in love for a third.

When those who love mutually are of such great benevolence that, as we have said, they wish every perfection to be shared, then it is necessary, as has been said, that each with equal desire and for a similar reason seek out someone with whom to share love, and that each devotedly possess such a one, according to the fullness of his power.

CHAPTER XVI

That fullness of power and wisdom seems to be able to exist in a single person

There usually is this special difference between the delights of charity and those of wisdom: The delights of wisdom are capable of and are accustomed to be drawn from one's own heart, while the intimate delights of charity are drawn from the heart of another. Whoever loves intimately and craves to be so loved is made anxious rather than delighted when he thirsts if he does not draw from his beloved's heart the sweetness of love for which he thirsts. But the delights of wisdom delight much more when they are derived from one's own heart. Nothing is defined contrary to nature if fullness of wisdom is said to be able to subsist in a single person. For it seems that even if there were only one person in Divinity, nevertheless he could have fullness of wisdom. However, fullness of wisdom can-

*We have here translated *condilectus* as "someone who shares in love for a third." The word, which seems to have been Richard's own invention, represents a crucial element in Richard's Trinitarian theology and in his subtle and penetrating understanding of the nature of true charity, divine or human. Cf. his own detailed description of the meaning of the term in Chapter XIX.

not exist without fullness of power, just as fullness of power cannot exist without fullness of wisdom. For without doubt he would not have the fullness of wisdom who would not know how he could obtain what he lacked in omnipotence. Conversely, without doubt he who could unwillingly suffer some defect of wisdom would lack fullness of power. For fullness of one cannot be had without fullness of the other. Therefore it follows that we understand the same thing concerning power that we have said concerning wisdom. For if omnipotence cannot be lacking where there is fullness of wisdom, it certainly seems that fullness of power as well as fullness of wisdom can be possessed by a single person.

CHAPTER XVII

That the fulfillment of happiness does not seem to be able to subsist without a pair of persons

The fulfillment of true and supreme happiness does not seem to be able to subsist in any way without a pair of persons. This is clearer than the light of day from those things which we have said above. For if there were only one person in that true Divinity, He certainly would not have anyone to whom He might give supreme love, nor anyone who might return supreme love to Him. Indeed, whence would abound for him those supremely sweet delights which, as has been said, are accustomed to be drawn from the heart of another rather than from one's own heart? For, as we have already said, nothing is sweeter than these delights; nothing is more delightful; nothing is more healthful, more excellent or more pleasurable than this sweetness. Therefore, how could divine happiness, which always lacked supreme sweetness and supreme delight, obtain an abundance of complete fullness? And so happiness demands a pair of persons, as has been said, in order that it can subsist with the integrity of all fullness.

CHAPTER XVIII

How the consummation of true and supreme goodness does not seem to be able to subsist without the completion of the Trinity

Let it disturb no one, let no one be indignant if we speak in a human manner to provide a clearer understanding of the truth of divine and supermundane things. We adopt this manner of speaking at the point of our necessity all the more confidently, the more frequently we discover it in sacred Scripture.

The supreme level of goodness seems to exist there, when supreme love is given and nothing is obtained in return for the fullness of its own happiness. But, as is most evident from what we have already said, this level of supreme perfection cannot be found between only two persons who mutually love. For indeed, in this case, each of those who love gives love, and from this each undoubtedly draws those delights of love, flowing with honey. If each were alone and lived like a hermit he would not have anyone from whom he could draw this. And so a great accumulation of joy and pleasure builds up for anyone who gives and receives love in fellowship with another. From this, therefore, we clearly gather that the supreme level of that generosity would have no place in Divinity if a third person were lacking in that plurality of persons. Certainly in only a pair of persons there would be no one with whom either of the two could share the excellent delights of His pleasure. For this reason it is given to be understood that the consummation of true and supreme goodness cannot subsist without completion of the Trinity.

CHAPTER XIX

How a trace of the Trinity can be grasped by examining only the particular nature of shared love

What has been proved by the manifold witness of reason concerning the affirmation of the Trinity can be confirmed by a sufficiently brief and very evident consideration. Let us ponder with

careful consideration the virtue and particular nature of shared love and we shall quickly discover what we seek. When one person gives love to another and he alone loves only the other, there certainly is love, but it is not a shared love. When two love each other mutually and give to each other the affection of supreme longing; when the affection of the first goes out to the second and the affection of the second goes out to the first and tends as it were in diverse ways—in this case there certainly is love on both sides, but it is not shared love. Shared love is properly said to exist when a third person is loved by two persons harmoniously and in community, and the affection of the two persons is fused into one affection by the flame of love for the third. From these things it is evident that shared love would have no place in Divinity itself if a third person were lacking to the other two persons. Here we are not speaking of just any shared love but of supreme shared love—a shared love of a sort such that a creature would never merit from the Creator and for which it would never be found worthy.

Who, I ask, should be able to explicate fitly how great is the virtue of supreme and totally perfect benevolence? Who, I ask, would suffice to estimate fitly what or how great is the worth of intimate and supreme harmony? If there is so much worth for each person in these two virtues on account of the virtue itself, what virtue, what worth, I ask, will there be where each is fashioned on account of the other, where one is greatly praised on account of the other, where one is brought to consummation on account of the other? However, what is intimate and supreme shared love, other than the mutual coming together of intimate benevolence and supreme harmony? Just as a virtue of so much worth and supereminent excellence cannot be lacking in the supreme and altogether perfect good, so it is not able to subsist without a Trinity of persons.

CHAPTER XX

That from shared fellowship with a third person in that Trinity it is argued that concordant charity and consocial love are never found anywhere in an individual

Consider now how union with a third person establishes concordant affection everywhere and brings about consocial love through all and in all. If you direct your attention to any one among these three persons, you will see that the other two love the third concordantly. If you turn your attention to the second, there in like manner you will find that the remaining pair unite with equal desire in love for him. If you bring the third of these into consideration, without doubt you will see that the affection of the others flows in equal harmony to the third. If creation is considered, there the cord of love is tripled so that where suspicion concerning a defect of love could arise more easily, certitude is made more firm by greater confederation. Behold how from shared fellowship with a third person in that Trinity it is argued that concordant charity and consocial love are never found anywhere in an isolated individual. Behold in the affirmation of the Trinity, so great, so firm a witness to truth occurs everywhere that a person for whom so much assurance is insufficient seems to be mad.

CHAPTER XXI

That there is supreme equality in that Trinity in which it is necessary for all to be equally perfect

What has been shown above concerning two can be inferred with equal reasoning also about the three, namely each one loving supremely and being loved supremely by each, because each is supremely perfect. The fullness of supreme happiness requires fullness of supreme pleasure. The fullness of supreme pleasure requires fullness of supreme charity. The fullness of supreme charity demands fullness of supreme perfection. And so where all must be equally perfect, it is necessary that all coincide in supreme equal-

ity. In all of them there will be equal wisdom, equal power, undifferentiated glory, uniform goodness, and eternal happiness, so that we may truly establish what the daily profession of Christian instruction teaches equally concerning the three: "the Divinity is one, glory equal, and majesty coeternal."* There no one is greater than another, no one is less than another; there no one is before another; no one is after another. And so it is established that in that Trinity all persons are coequal and coeternal together. For if they were not coeternal, for that reason they would not be coequal.

CHAPTER XXII

*That there is supreme simplicity in each person,
true and supreme unity in all together,
and marvelous identity everywhere*

In that supreme and totally perfect equality of persons, that supreme and supremely simple being is common to all. Thus it is the same for each one to exist as to live, to live as to understand, to understand as to be able. There wisdom does not differ from power, nor power from essence, and in this manner one comes to a similar conclusion in similar things. Thus you see that each thing is totally the same although it is in each person. But if supreme perfection is in that equality and supreme equality is in that perfection, will supreme fullness of wisdom be simultaneously in each individually and in all, and will supreme fullness of power be simultaneously in each individually and in all? But what is supreme and full power except omnipotence? However we know that omnipotence is called such because it is able to do everything. But if it is agreed that omnipotence is truly able to do everything, it will be able to carry out with ease what any other power would not be able to do. For this reason it is clear that only one omnipotence can exist. But it was proved above that omnipotence is the same as divine essence. Therefore, if it is common for all the persons to *have* omnipotence together—no, *rather* to *be* omnipotent, because there

**Athanasian Creed.*

to be is not different from to have—it will also be common for all to be one and the same essence. For, like omnipotence, there can be only one divine essence. Not only is what each person is completely the same; but each one is what each other is. And so, supreme simplicity is in each; true and supreme unity is in all together; and marvelous identity is everywhere if you pay attention well.

CHAPTER XXIII

*How the aforementioned equality ought to be understood in these persons
where there is so much unity and such identity*

We are able to understand in both a good way and a bad way what has been said concerning the equality of persons. Indeed, in so much simplicity and unity of persons there seems to be more identity than equality. We are able and accustomed to say that three golden statues are equal if they have the same purity and weight and the same similitude in everything. But such an equality is very different from that which exists in the Trinity of divine persons. For in that equality of statues the mass of gold in one statue is one thing and the mass of gold in another statue is another thing. According to this, one of the statues is one thing and the other is another thing. However, concerning that true and supreme Trinity we ought not to think that in it there are things that are different but equal among themselves. As has been shown already, whatever is in any one person of the Trinity, the same is also completely in any other person.

We do not unworthily say that three rational spirits are equal if they have the same power, the same wisdom, the same purity and goodness. But in this trinity of spirits, just as there are three persons, so it is evident that there are three substances. However, the supreme Trinity exists with unity of substance. And so, in that first trinity one thing and another thing, both equal, are found; but such equality is very different from the divine Trinity. But we say that persons are equal in that supreme Trinity for this reason: because that supreme and supremely simple being which belongs to one

person in this fullness and perfection also belongs to each other person in this fullness and perfection.

CHAPTER XXIV

How incomprehensible supreme coequality is from every viewpoint

Certainly one and the same substance is not something greater or lesser, better or worse than itself. Therefore any one person in the Trinity will not be something greater or better than any other person in the Trinity, since one and the same substance is certainly in each. The very same substance is simultaneously in each and in everyone; for this reason any two persons will not be something greater or better than any one person alone; nor will all three taken together be more than any two or any one alone by itself. However, in that trinity of persons where there are many substances, one person alone is something less than two, and all three taken together are something greater than any two. Now observe how incomprehensible is that coequality of greatness from every viewpoint and in every respect in that Trinity where unity does not lack plurality and plurality does not go beyond unity!

CHAPTER XXV

That in that Trinity nothing is dissimilar to itself nor is it unequal to any other in anything

But in order that you may admire this equality of the divine persons more, pay attention to the fact that in all other persons there is in one and the same person neither individuality without plurality nor unity without inequality. I pass in silence over the fact that a person is able to increase or decrease and become unequal in himself. I pass in silence over the fact that his power is one thing, his wisdom is another, his justice is another, and that he is able to be greater with respect to one thing and lesser with respect to another, and likewise better or worse. Certainly his power alone is

dissimilar to itself and his wisdom alone is unequal to itself. The very same thing happens in other cases. Observe his power and you will discover that one thing is easy for him, another is difficult and a third is impossible. And so his power is perceived as dissimilar and unequal to itself. In a similar way one thing is understandable to wisdom, while another is incomprehensible. For what human or angelic intelligence would ever be able to comprehend the very immensity of Divinity (I remain silent concerning other things)? While one and the same nature is more effective in some things, in other things it is less effective; in one respect it is less, in another it is greater, and is found to be dissimilar and unequal to itself. And so from these things we can gather that where there is no true simplicity, true equality cannot exist. However in that Trinity, nowhere is anything dissimilar to itself nor is it unequal to any other in anything. Surely where there is true eternity, there cannot be an earlier and a later; so also where there is unchangeable immensity, there cannot be a greater and a lesser.

In those who possess the same rational principle of eternity and immensity, no alternation or change of inequality can exist even partially because no "changing or shadow of change" is there (James 1:17). "There nothing is earlier, nothing is later; nothing is greater or lesser; but all three persons are coeternal and coequal with themselves."* Behold now we have proved by open and manifold reasoning how true that is which we are commanded to believe, namely, that we venerate "one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity."**

*Athanasian Creed

**Ibid.