

Darling Downs Parish of the AELC

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In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom also He made the universe. Hebrews 1:1-2.

The author of Hebrews tells us here that, what God wanted to communicate to mankind, He has communicated finally and completely through Jesus Christ. In the past, from the Fall of Man until Christ, God the Father used many different ways to communicate with man. In the Garden of Eden, He spoke to man directly. He spoke to the patriarchs by appearing to them as the Angel of the Lord. He spoke to Moses through a burning bush, and through a cloud on a mountain. He spoke to the prophets in dreams and visions. The message was always the same throughout all that time: That He would redeem mankind from their fallen state by His grace through faith in Christ, and restore creation. But in these last days, the writer of Hebrews says, *He has spoken to us by His Son.*

The message of the entire Bible is God saving mankind from sin, death, and devil by the atoning work of Christ. St. Augustine explained, “The New [Testament] is in the Old [Testament] concealed; The Old is in the New revealed.” This is the message God was communicating to man after the Fall in the Garden, and this is the message He communicates to us now.

Whenever God is speaking to us, however, He speaks to us by His external word. What I mean is this: God comes to man “externally,” through means. He communicates to us through words, using human language that men are capable of understanding. He uses physical elements and uses His word to connect His promises to them, and to deliver those promises to man. He does not work in man through “burnings” in the bosom. He does not work redemption in man apart from His word. St. Paul writes in Romans: *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ,” (Romans 10:17).*

The burning bush, the visions, all the other means by which God communicated the Gospel to man, were means of delivering to man the external word. And now, in these last days, God has spoken to us through Christ. God's communication with man has been concentrated down to Christ's atoning death and resurrection. It is finished, and there is no longer any need to burn bushes or send visions to prophets. God has spoken to us by His Son – the Word incarnate, who bled and died on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sins of the world. This word, the message of Christ, has been collected for us into the volume of Holy Scripture we call the Bible. When you read the Bible, you hear God's voice. It is God who speaks to you through those words on the page. When you hear faithful preaching, it is God who speaks to you, through the voice of that faithful pastor. When you receive the Sacrament of the Altar you hear God's word of promise - given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins - and faith takes hold of that promise, connected with those physical elements of bread and wine.

Martin Luther in his day dealt with “enthusiasts,” or people who believed that they received the Spirit and faith without God's Word, i.e., by some mystical divine “inner revelation.” The world is no less full of people today who deny the efficacy of Holy Scripture, yet claim that God has given them some new revelation or inner illumination allowing them to ignore what Scripture teaches. What Luther had to say about enthusiasts is equally appropriate for us today.

He [the devil] led them [Adam and Eve] from God's outward word to spiritualising and self-pride. And yet He did this through outward words. In the same way our enthusiasts today condemn the outward word. Yet they themselves are not silent. They fill the world with their babbling and writings, as if the spirit could not come through the Apostle's writings and spoken word, but has to come through their writings and words. Why don't they leave out their own sermons and writings and let the Spirit Himself come to people without their writings before them, as they boast that He has come into them without the preaching of the Scriptures? (Luther, *The Smalcald Articles*).

The Gospel is the means by which the Holy Spirit offers us all the blessings of Christ and creates faith in people. The written and spoken (preached) word

of the Gospel, as well as the sacraments - God's word of promise connected to bread and wine, and water - are the means of grace.

Lest I be accused of "putting God in a box," I must clarify that I am not saying it is impossible for God to impart divine revelations today, or that it is impossible for God to convert men apart from His Word. I'm simply saying that He does not wish to. God has always dealt with man through means, and He expressly tells us that it is His will to do so. So, while it is indeed possible for God to send man a "burning in the bosom," we shouldn't expect Him to do so, because He has told us that He doesn't operate that way. Many mistakenly take their intense feelings, worked up in a religious frenzy, as a way to assure themselves that they are in the faith. Feelings change, however, and should certainly not be used as a basis for assurance of faith. Furthermore, anyone who claims that he has received a divine revelation should be tested against what we know for certain to be divine revelation - Holy Scripture. Whatever is not in accord with Scripture should be soundly rejected. Luther comments:

In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power [life], and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomet. Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments. For God wished to appear even to Moses through the burning bush and spoken Word; and no prophet neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments [or spoken Word]. Neither was John the Baptist conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without the voice of Mary. And Peter says: *The prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*, (2 Peter 1:19-21). Without the outward Word, however, they

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were not holy, much less would the Holy Ghost have moved them to speak when they still were unholy [or profane]; for they were holy, says he, since the Holy Ghost spake through them (Luther).

We should marvel at how God deals with us. Not only has He redeemed us by His grace, through faith alone in Christ, He has given us His external Word, by which we can be certain of God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life, even when we feel the weight of our sin, and do not feel "saved." That can sustain and comfort us when our bosoms cease to burn, our inner illumination goes dim, and we remember what kind of rotten sinners we are, undeserving of God's favour. In those times we can look to God's external Word; whether in Scriptures, in the preaching of a faithful pastor, or in the Lord's Supper or remembrance of our Baptism, and have assurance that though we are sinners, God has forgiven us for Christ's sake, and is faithful.

Many of you have heard of Andrew Bolt. Andrew writes for the Herald Sun, Daily Telegraph & Advertiser and runs Australia's most-read political blog. On week nights he hosts The Bolt Report on Sky News at 7pm and his Macquarie Radio show at 8pm. Andrew Bolt openly admits he is not a Christian, and the following article is taken from his blog site.

War on Christianity is fuelled by Ignorance

Andrew Bolt

It's not the haters who will kill Christianity. It's the ignorant, who have no clue how we non-Christians will suffer.

But, wow, that hatred sure is feral. The latest examples?

One: the Greens this week say they want to strip churches of their "right to discriminate" - actually their freedom to insist their employees live the faith.

Two: Sydney University's Student Union threatened to deregister the university's Evangelical Union unless it stopped insisting members declare their faith in Jesus Christ.

Three: Christian lobby group Family Voice Australia this week accused Facebook of deleting one of its pages arguing against same-sex marriage.

Four: Facebook administrators had earlier deleted a page by the Centre for Public Christianity calling on same-sex marriage activists to be less abusive (It was restored after protests by Tim Wilson, the former freedom commissioner and now Liberal candidate in Goldstein).

Five: Yet another church in Melbourne was burned to the ground last month and four in Geelong have been torched in six months — arson attacks that got a fraction of the media attention given to the burning of a Geelong mosque (Police say the mosque may have been mistaken for the church this bluestone building originally was).

These attacks are part of a disturbing pattern. Everywhere Christians are being harassed out of the public space. In Victoria, for instance, state schools have new rules against the singing of not just hymns but, it seems, the more religious Christmas carols.

In Tasmania, a former transgender Greens candidate complained to the state’s Anti-Discrimination Commission about a Catholic Church pamphlet opposing same-sex marriage (She has since dropped her action).

Even worse, the commission ordered the local archbishop, with all Australia’s Catholic bishops, to explain whether they should be allowed to keep offending people by preaching church doctrine. SBS has already decided Christians shouldn’t.

It banned an ad made by Christians defending traditional marriage, yet ran one by Ashley Madison for a dating service for adulterers.

The media is particularly hostile to Christians, using the sex scandals of churches last century as an excuse to smash the churches today. Radio and television outlets recently played at high rotation a song by comedian Tim Minchin vilifying Catholic Cardinal George Pell as a “coward” and “scum” and falsely suggesting he’d covered up for paedophile priests.

Last year, actor Rachel Griffiths told ABC radio she was “quite elated” that arsonists had burned down the beautiful St James Church in Brighton because it had decades ago had a priest who’d abused children.

Just check how The Age this year marked Easter, Christianity's holiest festival. On Maundy Thursday, it complained that St James was being rebuilt for \$20 million and called for churches to be stripped of their tax exemption. On Good Friday, it praised a retired teacher who'd once confronted a paedophile priest and later claimed, exaggeratedly, the Catholic Church was keeping files "secret" from victims.

True, attacks on the church are nothing new. What is new, though, is the ignorance of so many about what's at stake and their indifference to the fight. How many young Australians, even young journalists, understand just what Christianity teaches and inspires?

Last month The Australian reported on an Islamic State sympathiser in Kempsey prison who allegedly attacked a former Australian soldier, carving "e4e" into his head.

The reporter explained: "The phrase is thought to refer to 'an eye for an eye', which appears in both Christian and Islamic texts."

But the Christian New Testament actually records Jesus denouncing such justice: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth'.

But I tell you, ... if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." The Koran, though, says "a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution".

This difference explains why no Christian country has an eye-for-an-eye justice system, but a Muslim theocracy such as Iran does. Last year, for instance, a man in Karaj who blinded someone in an acid attack had his own eye put out.

But making Islam seem no worse than Christianity is now fashionable - not least because it excuses surrender to a creed that threatens the freedoms Christianity defends.

The most bizarre example of this double standard occurred earlier this month when a caller rang up ABC presenter Jon Faine, a vehement critic of Christianity but an equally passionate defender of Islam.

Caller: I've got a Sunni Muslim friend ... He loves his AFL, you know, a real, typical kind of Aussie bloke. But ... he's adamant that stoning is the best punishment for adultery ...

Faine: Why is that any different to people in the Orthodox Jewish community for instance who have some bizarre beliefs or people in the Hillsong or any other happy-clappy Christian community who have all sorts of bizarre beliefs? You know, they just live their lives. It's not as if they put them into practice.

Caller: That may be true, Jon, but I'm specifically wondering what you would do in that situation?

Faine: Oh, I'd say, well, that's pretty wacky and who's going to win on Saturday?

Our gay activists are no better. Like the Greens, they rage at the church's stand on same-sex marriage but are completely silent about the most violent expression of gay hatred - the hanging of gays in Iran and the throwing of gays off tall buildings by the Islamic State in Syria.

These new Christ-haters and hypocrites are dangerously ignorant of an important truth: the gods actually differ and inspire different behaviour.

Christianity, for instance, tells us to treat even strangers as we would our own kin and insists the life of even the most lowly is sacred.

Christ is recorded in the New Testament as preventing the stoning of an adulterous woman, famously saying: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

The Muslim prophet Muhammed, however, is recorded in the famous biography by Ibn Ishaq of having ordered the murder of "two singing-girls, Fartana and her friend, who used to sing satirical songs about the apostle".

The founders of the faiths led very different lives - one a preacher of nonviolence, the other a warrior king. Their respective religions express their culture and culture counts in influencing behaviour today.

Consider: which societies are safest for nonbelievers? Which the most likely to be democracies? Which the least likely to treat terrorists as heroes?

Which are least likely to allow humans to be destroyed for an allegedly higher cause?

Each time, the answer is Christian. Christianity profoundly inspires the values of those societies, even if many of their citizens despise it.

I am no Christian, but I do have a faith in Christianity. Will we be this safe once it's gone?

Our Seminary student, Roman Turenko, has begun his studies. From May 16 to July 22 Roman will be studying elementary Greek with Pastor Brock Abbott from Walther Theological Seminary. I have spoken to Roman since he began, and he is doing well in his Greek. Once the Greek is complete, Roman will then move on to other subjects as listed below. His training will take place over the next three years, with his fourth year being a vicarage year:

May-July 2016	Elementary Greek		
	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter
1 st Year (Sept 2016 – May 2017)	Elementary Hebrew I Gospels I Dogmatics I Hermeneutics Apostles to AD 250	Elementary Hebrew II Acts Dogmatics II Pastoral Theology I AD 250-600	Law I Writings I Dogmatics III Pastoral Theology II Hebrew Readings
2 nd Year (Dates to be confirmed)	Pauline Epistles I Book of Concord I Lutheran Worship I Middle Ages	Pauline Epistles II Book of Concord II Homiletics I Reformation	Law II Writings II Book of Concord III Pastoral Theology III Ethics
3 rd Year (Dates to be confirmed)	Gospels II Comparative Symbolics I Lutheran Worship II AD 1800-1914	Revelation Comparative Symbolics II Homiletics II Modern Age	Prophets II Writings II Comparative Symbolics III Pastoral Theology IV Biblical counseling

Roman's teachers for the 1st year will be:

Elementary Hebrew I	Brock Abbott
Gospels I	Brock Abbott
Dogmatics I	Peter Ziebell
Hermeneutics	Bill Mack
Apostles to AD 250	James Shaw

Elementary Hebrew II	Brock Abbott
Acts	Brock Abbott
Dogmatics II	Peter Ziebell
Pastoral Theology I	Bill Mack
AD 250-600	James Shaw

Law I	Brock Abbott
Writings I	Brock Abbott
Dogmatics III	Peter Ziebell
Pastoral Theology II	Bill Mack
Hebrew Readings	Brock Abbott

Pastors Abbott, Mack, and Shaw are active ULMA pastors with congregations who also teach at Walther Theological Seminary. A regular update on Roman's progress will be made, so please pray for Roman and his teachers. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to ask either Pastor or your seminary committee representative.

“The gospel cannot be truly preached without offense and tumult.” —
Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*

Drunken Cowboys

Human nature is like a drunken cowboy riding a horse. He climbs into the saddle, but because he is inebriated, he can't sit up straight. After just a few hundred yards, he falls off the left side of his horse.

Stubbornly he picks himself up and gets back on his horse. He tells himself, "I better lean to the right this time so I don't fall off again." A few hundred yards later, he slides off the other side.

As human beings, the pendulum of our emotions and attitudes seldom stays in the middle of the road. As individuals and as a society we tend to fall into extremes.

That truth can be seen, for example, in how we deal with the two most basic teachings of the Bible: The Law and the Gospel. Most parts of the Bible fall into one of those two categories.

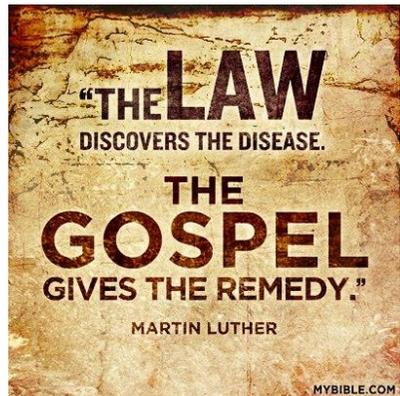
The Law are God's commands. The Law tells us, "Do this and don't do that." The Law shows us the consequences of disobedience.

The Gospel are God's promises. The Gospel is the good news about how Jesus suffered our punishment in our place – how God freely forgives and gives us heaven.

The Law demands; the Gospel gives. The Law declares us guilty; the Gospel declares us innocent. The Law shows us our sins; the Gospel shows us our Saviour.

Both are true. Both are inspired by God. Each plays a role in our faith and salvation. The Law is a mirror which shows us the parts of ourselves we don't like to see – all our dirty and ugly failings. The Law shows us the hell we deserve and our utter helplessness to save ourselves.

The Gospel shows how God loved us so much he gave up everything to save us. The Gospel offers and gives faith and forgiveness. The Gospel



empowers and motivates us to thank God with our lives. The Law then guides us, showing us how we can thank God by lovingly serving him and others.

Like a drunken cowboy, however, we tend to slip off the saddle. We fall into the ditch of legalism. We make God's love and the gift of heaven dependent on what we do. "Yes, Jesus died for your sins, but you still have to earn it by obeying God... by being a good person... by going to church."

The Gospel contains no ifs or buts. It makes no demands. It only gives.

But we have to be careful not to fall off the other side of the horse. Yes, heaven is God's free gift. You can't commit a sin God won't forgive, but forgiveness is not a license to sin. Watch out. The devil loves to whisper in our ears, "It's no big deal. Nobody's perfect. God will forgive you anyway."

God hates sin. He wants us to strive for perfection – to serve him faithfully with our lives. But we don't live good lives in order to earn heaven. We live good lives to thank God for the heaven he gives.

Each of us has a drunken cowboy living in his or her heart who has a hard time staying on his saddle. Sometimes we fall into the ditch of pride and legalism - thinking God's love and gift of heaven depend on what we do. Then we fall off the other side into the ditch of cheap grace, treating forgiveness as a license to sin.

Properly understanding the relationship between God's Law and Gospel is the single greatest skill a Christian can learn.

It will help you stay in the saddle.

Sunday 22 May is Trinity Sunday. The Athanasian Creed is the long one we read every Trinity Sunday, and, usually, only on Trinity Sunday. It was not written by Athanasius, but named for him about four centuries after he lived. Athanasius was one of the chief adversaries of an anti-Trinitarian theology called Arianism. Arius (for whom Arianism is named) was an early Bishop in Egypt who taught the oh-so-reasonable doctrine that God was one, The Father, and that the Son was a created being, superior to human beings, but of a different nature than God the Father and inferior to Him. The Holy Spirit was produced by Jesus, according to this theology. No Trinity.

This was popular stuff, and it nearly took over the entire Church before it was condemned as a heresy by the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, and again by the Council of Constantinople in 381. That should have ended it, but theological “opinions” do not die easily, and Arianism continued as a force in the Church until the 800’s, at about the time of the writing of the Athanasian Creed. It generally died out as a teaching only the advocates of Arianism died out, sometimes at the point of a sword. Those people took their religion seriously!

The rigor and the importance of the debate is reflected in the creed. The creed was not intended for regular use in worship, by the way, but as something like our Lutheran Confessions; a statement of the true faith and a touchstone. Those who were “orthodox,” “right teaching,” could confess this creed whole-heartedly. Those who had qualms about it were not to be trusted. We use it in church each year to remember the complexity of the doctrine of the Trinity, and to remind ourselves to pay attention to our faith. It is precious, because it expresses the saving faith - the only saving faith.

The creed begins: *Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold the true Christian faith. One must hold to the true, correct faith, to be saved. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish for eternity.* The Christian Church from the very beginning has always said, *“You have to know the truth and believe the truth. Close doesn’t cut it.”*

Then it goes on to talk about the Trinity. It tells us that we need to be careful not to divide God into three parts, or mix the parts together and pretend that “the Trinity” is just a mode of reference, or a semantic device for talking about God. The unity of the Trinity in one “essence” or “being” is vital, and yet so is the “three-ness.” It gets wordy here, talking about how each divine quality is owned by each member of the Trinity, and yet there are not three of each, but only One. You remember, *For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is still another, but there is one Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, equal in glory and coequal in majesty. What the Father is, that is the Son and that is the Holy Spirit; the Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated; The Father is unlimited, the Son is unlimited, the Holy Spirit is unlimited; The*

Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal; and yet they are not three eternals but one eternal, just as there are not three who are uncreated and who are unlimited, but there is one who is uncreated and unlimited. And so forth.

But first they make the point that *the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is still another*. Then afterwards, they make the point that there is only one Father, one Son, and one Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and yet there is just one God. This is where our logic begins to falter. And it should. What kind of God would He be if He were not capable of thinking and being in ways we cannot imagine? What makes this wonderful is not that it can be confusing, but that this God, who is so far beyond our computing and reasoning out, cares about us. He did not just create us, but He saw our predicament in sin and chose to redeem us and save us - and reveal Himself to us! God explaining Himself to us is something like our answering the questions of a two year-old who has just discovered the word, “Why?”. The answers simply lead to another question; in the case of the child, another “Why?”. God knows we cannot fully comprehend Him, but He wants us to know and try to understand Him anyhow.

For just as we are compelled by Christian truth to acknowledge each person by Himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Christian religion to say that there are three Gods or three Lords. This means that if you are a Christian, you believe this; and if you don't believe this, you are not a Christian, no matter what you say! The mystery of the Trinity, the part of it that we would never reason our way to, but needed to have simply ‘revealed’ to us, is contained in those words at the start of this paragraph. There we have the ‘three’ and the ‘one’ carefully set forth. It doesn't make it more reasonable, but it is set forth simply and clearly.

Now, although you can say the same things about the three Persons of the Trinity, they are distinguishable for us because God has revealed how they may be distinguished. The Creed says, *The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten by anybody. The Son was not made or created, but was begotten by the Father. The Holy Spirit was not made or created or begotten,*

but proceeds from the Father and the Son. Accordingly there is one Father and not three Fathers, one Son and not three Sons, one Holy Spirit and not three Holy Spirits.

I hope you noticed that the only way to distinguish between the Persons of the Trinity is in the words we use to describe them. Since God is a spirit (*therefore possessing no physical body*) we cannot describe Him or distinguish by how He looks. We identify each person by what God tells us about Himself. The Father is God, but without any definition or limitation, or whatsoever. The Son, however, is described as “begotten.” The Bible even refers to Jesus as the “only-begotten,” as in John 1 and 3, and in Hebrews and 1 John. What it means, or how it works precisely, is not explained to us, but we have the word to distinguish the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is said, in Scriptures, to be proceeding.

Of course, when we see Jesus, we know we are dealing with the Son. Or do we? What we see is the Son. Only Jesus died on the cross. But Jesus added to the confusion here when He told Philip, *“Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.”* Apparently, when we see Jesus, we are seeing God, even the Father, somehow. Jesus even tells us that we cannot worship God without worshipping the Son: *“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.”*

Hebrews goes on to tell us that Jesus is the image and likeness of God the Father, and the clearest revelation of God. Some have taken that and tried to run with the idea of worshipping Jesus only. After all, if you have Jesus, you have God, right? But that ‘Jesus Only’ stuff is contrary to other Scriptures, and even to Jesus Himself. God wants us to know Him as He is, not take what we know and try to make something simple out of it. He wants us to do the heavy lifting of thinking about the truth, even if it is beyond our complete

comprehension. Doing so is an act of worship. Doing it confesses that God is worth the work!

The Athanasian Creed continues: *And among these three persons none is before or after another, none is greater or less than another, but all three persons are co-equal and co-eternal, and accordingly, as has been stated above, three persons are to be worshipped in one Godhead and one God is to be worshipped in three persons. Whoever wishes to be saved must think thus about the Trinity.*

A deity that would make perfect sense to us, is the wrong deity – a false god.

The Trinity is equal. There is no priority here. There is no hierarchy. We don't divide them, or separate the Persons of the Trinity, we simply distinguish between them as distinct Persons, and yet there is only one God. We distinguish between them because God teaches us about them - or Himself. This doctrine is a sort of identification. The true God is this confusing, not quite manageable to the human mind, God. A deity that would make perfect sense to us, is the wrong deity - a false god. That would be a god that served man's ego and man's will. The true God doesn't do that. He created us. He redeemed us for His own reasons. He chose each individual among His people out of a motivation we call "grace." He serves us, but according to His will and His plans, not our own. We just find His will and plans delightful, when we understand what they mean for us in eternity.

What this piece of the Creed tells us is that this God, the only true God, must be known as He is. The generic idea that "as long as you believe something," you are okay, is false. The thought that we can "name it and claim it" when it comes to salvation is dead wrong - and dead is where the adherents of that notion will find themselves. Believing that we don't need to know too much, that God is happy if we just acknowledge Him somehow, and that going to church is a good thing without regard for which church and what they teach and who it is you believe in is a deception. That teaching is the devil's work, not God's Word.

The comfort that “well, at least they are going to church” is a false comfort. There is no particular value to going to a church that teaches falsely, any more than there is a value to eating if the place you eat deliberately poisons the food. It is true that as long as the Word of God is used, there is a hope that the Word will work in the hearts of some of those who hear it, but people do not go to a place that falsifies the truth to learn the truth, they go there to escape it. If you want to feel like you are going to church but don’t want to be bothered with the truth about God, or deal with the true God Himself, then any non-denominational assembly, or mainline denomination for that matter, that appeals to you will do fine. If you want to grow in the truth and in respect to the true God, you have to go where that truth is proclaimed, and that true God is worshiped deliberately. And sometimes that requires testing those places congregation by congregation.

The rest of the Athanasian Creed deals with the rest of the Christian faith in familiar terms, almost like the Nicene Creed. It takes care to describe the personal union in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity with very precise terminology. Then it makes the statement, *At His coming all men shall rise with their bodies and give an account of their own deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire.*

These words can only be understood in the light of the Gospel - they that have done good have had their sins forgiven (by grace through faith, so only good remains to be seen) and the rest are accountable for their evil. Any other interpretation eliminates forgiveness and salvation.

Finally the Creed ends with, *This is the true Christian faith. Unless a man believe this firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved.*

It reminds us once again at the end that this confession is what defines a Christian as Christian, and that doctrine is no casual matter, but a vitally important thing! It serves us well, even in these easy-going days, to keep this reality in mind - and, of course, the very important truth of the doctrine of the Trinity!