

First Friends Church
Lynda Ladwig
June 7, 2020
Lessons from an Avocado
John 1:7; John 16:12-15; 2 Corinthians 13:13

Scripture readings:

John 1:7

He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

John 16:12-15

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

2 Corinthians 13:13

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”

Message:

During my childhood we lived in La Habra Heights, the property included three and a half acres of Avocado trees. My Grandparents lived just down the road and had several more acres of avocados which were farmed for Calvo growers. All that is to say I grew up with a love for avocados and they were prepared and integrated into meals in many different ways. I remember my grandmother always made some kind of lime jello with pineapple that she folded some kind of avocado mixture into that sounds dreadful even now, but was actually pretty tasty. One of my favorite ways to eat avocados was on toast and that was long before avocado toast was trendy and cost \$10.95. Who knew?! The first time I had to purchase an avocado, I couldn't believe the price. Something that was always so available to me was now going to require sacrificing something else on the shopping list if it was going to fit within my budget!

As many of you know I am partial to children's ministry and finding ways to explain or demonstrate what I perceive is a simple truth around a particular scripture, testimony or story. Sometimes the most complex and difficult passages often have a simple truth that can be pulled directly from the story or passage and other times what should be simple can elude detection and takes a lot of energy to

find. But the coolest thing is the wondering, and the questions that can be brought to mind and explored thru the eyes of children. I've always wished someone would speak on the "Trinity" so I could use an Avocado as a prop at children's time.

But, I don't hear Quakers speak much about the "Trinity" and perhaps it is with good reasons. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible and doesn't appear as a theological term till near the end of the second century when it was adopted by the Council of Nicea in 325 and The Council of Constantinople in 381, and after over a century of church discussion, schisms, and debate it was confirmed as official church doctrine.

Quakers are a faith of "experience", rather than accepted dogmas and doctrines. What is known about God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit, is know "experimentally" and **experientially**, through reading, prayer and worship and is the true guide.

While many Friends opposed the wording of the Trinitarian doctrine, in their own personal experiences they believed in God the Father/Mother, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. George Fox once said that "the Father of life drew me to his son by his spirit". I like that, in this statement I can see the love of God in relationship not only with each other but acting in concert as one God of love and care to bring us into relationship.

In his book, *A Living Faith*, Wilmer Cooper points out that Friends took issue with the doctrine of the Trinity... "On the grounds that it was extra-biblical and would violate the unity of the Godhead. For Christian theology, however, the Trinity preserves and sets forth the salient aspects of the Godhead. God the Father/Mother is the first person of the Trinity and is the source of life from which all creation flows. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is the incarnation of God in history; it is here that the divine and human are brought together. Christians, including Quakers, have held that this divine Person (the eternal Christ) pre-existed the historical Jesus as the *Logos*, referred to in the opening verses of John's gospel. The third person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, who is the resurrected Christ promised to us as Counselor, Advocate, or Paraclete in (John14:15-17). This is clearly the Christ Within, which Quakers claim to be the living reality of God acting in and through us as individuals and through the world around us. Thus the Spirit is God in action in the world here and now..."

In answer to the charges at Boston in New England that the Quakers denied the Trinity, Isaac Pennington had declared that on the contrary Friends "set their seal to the truth of that scripture in I John 1:7 ... but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

That these three are distinct, as three separate beings or persons, this they read not" and the "God-Head, which we own as the Scriptures express it,

and as we have the sensible, experimental knowledge of it," quoting again I John v. 7. "This I believe from my Heart and have infallible demonstrations of: for I know three and feel three in Spirit."

Theologically, Quakers can be classified as a "Unitarianism of the Spirit." We give most emphasis to the third element in the Christian Trinity, without denying the value of the other two.

The word Trinity is a way of acknowledging what the Bible reveals to us about God, that God is yet three persons "who have the same essence distinguished in three persons."

While reading a blog "Quaker Oats Live" this unknown author spoke to me . God's essence is to be in relationship, and without someone to relate to God would cease to exist. This doesn't mean that God needs humans, but that God needs to be in some way more than one in God's self. I really like this idea--that the whole essence of the divine is love for other through and alongside and inside love for self--that they are so inextricably linked as to be the same. We are called to "love God and love our neighbor as ourself," and in God these three are the same thing although we as humans need to separate them out in our minds. This is a vibrant trio, full of movement and action, a love that is not just a passive feeling but an active being.

There are several different objects that can be used to illustrate the concept of the Trinity, "water, ice and steam all different forms, but all are H₂O,

Or using the root, trunk, and branch yet there is one tree.

And my favorite the avocado: consisting of the seed that resides in the center of the avocado. The fruit or flesh that grows around the seed and provides nourishment and substance; then finally the skin adding its protection and covering.

But all these analogies have a flaw. Because none of them reflects the lively movement by which the three persons of the Godhead represent one another and thereby constitute the one God." Close your eyes and imagine for just a moment that you are in a dark room and in this room there are three candles each has been lit, each actively flickering and yet there is one light. Can you see it? Although each of the three has its own distinct light they all work together harmoniously to provide us with one light enabling us to find our way in the darkness. When you are ready you can open your eyes.

No matter how you see the persons of the Trinity you can rest assured that one will certainly guide you to others

I would like share a dialogue I found on the Internet between a father and son that concerns the Trinity. It was written by Charlie Woodward, Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church Westerville, Ohio.

C: Dad, I got a question.

P: What is it, Son?

C: Well, today in Sunday School, we talked about God.

P: God, huh. Maybe you should talk to your mother.

C: Come on, Dad.

P: Okay, Son, what is your question?

C: Well, our teacher was trying to explain the Trinity, you know, God in three persons?

P: Son, I REALLY think this is a Mom question, don't you?

C: Dad....

P: All right, what is your question?

C: Well, I guess it is just confusing. I mean, I have never met a Trinity before.

P: What do you mean, Son?

C: Everyone I know is just one person, not three.

P: I see. And this worries you?

C: It's just confusing, Dad. I mean, who is this Trinity God is supposed to be?

P: That is a good question, Son.

C: (PAUSE) Well...

P: Well, what?

C: Don't you have some wonderful parental insight to help me out, here?

P: Right, well, let me think. God is like H₂O, you know, Ice, liquid and steam, all H₂O, but different make-ups...

C: So God is like water?

P: Well, not exactly. Oh, okay. Let's try this...your Mother, for instance... She is one person, but she is a mother, a wife and a daughter...

C: So Mom is God?

P: Let's not go there, Son. Let me think....

C: What about the beauty of a flower, or the smile of a baby?

P: What? How is that like Trinity?

C: I don't know, but when I see something like that, I know that God must have had a hand in it.

P: I would agree with you there, Son.

C: But, which one?

P: Which one what?

C: Which God is involved in something like that?

P: I am not following you here, Son.

C: Well, if God is three persons, which person makes the flowers bloom? Which person breathes new life into a baby?

P: Now wait, remember we have a rule in this house. Mom answers all questions about babies, okay?

C: Not just babies, Dad, everything. Which person paints the colors of the sunset?

Which person listens to me when no one else will? Which one?

P: Wow. These are good questions, Son.

C: Which one is it? And how do we know? And who decides? And do they ever argue with each other? Do they live in the same place? Can you see them all, or just some of them? How can you tell them apart? Are they identical? Is it just three, or could it be four, or five, or more?

P: (LONG PAUSE - staring at Child) Son, the Trinity is like an apple, it has a core, the meat of the apple and the skin...

C: Dad?

P: Or maybe, like a three-leafed clover?

C: You don't know do you?

P: Or a triangle?

C: I'll go ask Mom, or whoever she is!

P: Or three interlocking circles....?

The Trinity is a mystery, but at the same time it is the loving, redemptive and guiding power of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes. The spirit will guide you into all the truth. "The Spirit gathers us together in a community of faithful people so again and again we can be reminded of all the truths we have learned about this God. There are many things in this world that are far beyond what our finite minds can grasp. We cannot even hope to understand the majority of God's truth, but we have been given the ability to question and wonder, the faith to accept, the trust to believe and the power and courage to stand by our convictions.

For some this is difficult because our minds, our souls want to understand everything so we can be in control. There is a mystery about God which I am willing to live with and I hope you are, too.