

# THE HOLY TRINITY

By Arthur M. Coon

Taken from *The Theosophical Seal* by Arthur M. Coon.  
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In approaching the subject of "The Holy Trinity," one does so with a feeling of awe and humility. With awe, because the imagination staggers at the immensity of the concept. With humility, because the human mind can only leap upward in search of the Infinite, and like the waves of the sea, fall back again upon itself. Yet there is no greater glory which the mind can achieve than thus to leap upward in flights of imagination into the great unknown, if only to return to its own level of "proven fact." It is only by this reaching outward, upward or inward into the unknown and unproven that new truths are discovered; and it is thus that the frontiers of knowledge keep ever expanding.

Upon such a subject as a "Divine Trinity," we can in reality know nothing. We may only theorize, using a faculty higher than the mind. Yet how easy it is to crystalize such sublime conceptions into frozen dogmas. The human mind is prone to catalogue every idea that comes to it, and it does not hesitate to classify and define the Infinite. The great danger is that it builds a wall of finality around itself. The believer wants his "credo" wrapped up and labeled, "This is so-and-so." The unbeliever rejects *in toto* everything that cannot pass the laboratory test. Both shut themselves smugly within walls of their own building. The imagination must be kept free to scale this barrier of dogma and established "fact" and to ascend into realms of infinitely increasing glory. The true seeker must, with increasing effort, keep from erecting fences around even his most spiritual concept, in order that the intuitive faculty may be free to discover new vistas of unspeakable grandeur and beauty. In the presentation of our subject, this thought must motivate all that is said, else the wonder of the conception of the Infinite become nailed upon a cross of words.

Our first conception of Deity must be predicated by the fact, or let us say idea, that *God is one*. Any thought of the Ultimate as having a partner or rival sharing or competing for dominion is untenable. Lesser deities or manifestations of Deity there may be, but behind all manifestations, or as the Kabalists say "Emanations," there must be the ONE UNMANIFEST, Absolute Being or Principle.

When we turn our thoughts to the subject of the Trinity, we come up against the problem of orthodoxy. The history of Christianity bears evidence to the blurring and clouding of the pure teachings of its Founder. Many and bitter have been the

controversies of the Church's theologians over the subject of the "Three Persons"; and the misunderstanding concerning the Christian Creed has resulted in intolerance and bigotry.

So we approach the idea of the Trinity or "Three Persons in one God" with an "open mind and an eager intellect." One thing which must strike the student of comparative religions as the outstanding characteristic of Christianity is the idea of "Personality" as regards its concept of Deity. This does not mean that Christianity, through its purest teachings, portrays an anthropomorphic God—although this may not be said of many of its more zealous exponents. Some wit once said that "God created man in His own image, and man has been returning the compliment ever since." And of course, in a real sense, that is all that he can do. To each person, God can be no more than that individual's highest concept of Him. A fuller expansion of that conception opens to his awareness a realm of glory wherein God becomes the One Life, Infinite Mind or Universal Principle. Beyond this high concept, description of Deity awaits humanity's further expansion of consciousness.

To say that Christianity is unique in its portrayal of God as a personality is not to infer that other great religions are lacking in the personal aspect of their deities. On the contrary, mythology is replete with the stories of gods and demi-gods who have assumed human form and took upon themselves human characteristics. Ancient India had her Avatars, and Incarnations of her Gods, Vishnu and Shiva. However, it remained for Christianity to give to the world its particular emphasis on the personal aspect of Deity. God became a loving Father, vitally interested in the affairs of His children, and taking an active participation in influencing and guiding their destinies. "Not a sparrow falleth" and "closer than hands and feet" are phrases that are indicative of this new personal attitude towards Deity. Jesus continually referred to God as "My Father," and gave to the world the prayer which is universally known as "Our Father." His own relationship with God was as intimate as life itself. He said, "I and my Father are one." In contrast, we find no such identification with Deity in the older religions. When we consider the many gods of the Greek pantheon, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that these figures are purely allegorical. In ancient Egypt, Osiris, Horus and Isis were looked upon as symbols of great cosmic processes and universal laws rather than as beings, in an individual sense.

The idea of God as a Trinity was not originally a part of the Christian doctrine. Certainly it was not prominent in the teachings of Jesus. While He made continual reference to God as Father, it was not until His farewell discourse to His disciples in the Upper Room did He speak of the "Comforter . . . even the Spirit of Truth . . . which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send . . . [who will] abide with you forever." Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His disciples to "go ye

therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." St. Paul, in his Epistles, while not mentioning the word "Trinity," developed the idea of the three members of the Godhead. Some scholars assert that much of St. Paul's writings show influence of the Neo-Platonic school, in which he is said to have been an initiate. It was not until the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, during the development of that document of principles known as the *Nicene Creed*, that the idea of the "Trinity" or "Three Persons in One God" became definitely established as a Christian doctrine. Today it is universally accepted by the church, both Catholic and Protestant.

In order to rationalize the idea of "three Gods in One" so as to better meet the limitations of our understanding, and at the same time keep within the limits of this brief study, we shall consider the subject of the "Persons" of the Trinity from two points of view: first, the nature of their being; and second, their function or work in a field of manifestation—our universe.

It is significant that the very first reference to God in the Book of Genesis is the Hebrew word *Elohim*. "In the beginning Elohim brought into manifestation. . . ." It is most significant, and a fact entirely unknown, or else ignored by translators, that the word *Elohim* is plural, and plural in Hebraic means *more than two*. Moreover, the word is both masculine and feminine. What can that mean? Surely it means that at the point or level at which Creation begins, the One Unmanifested Deity or Principle behind and beyond all manifestation appears as a plurality, and is neither male nor female, but rather contains within "Himself" the qualities or potencies of both. Occult tradition tells us that the "Elohim" represents a hierarchy of lesser deities, that is Logoi or Archangels, having to do with Cosmic creative processes.

In the Athanasian Creed, which is a later and more detailed edition of the Nicene document, there is the statement, "In this Trinity, none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another, but the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal." Although this absolute equality of the "Three Persons" must be accepted as a truism, it is equally true that they present a vast difference in their nature and relationship with man. Likewise that part of the statement which says, "none is afore or after other" needs some qualification, for as we shall see later, with regard to the work of the Trinity in the creation and building of a universe, the element of time and sequence makes an appearance.

## THE FATHER

The Father aspect of Deity most nearly represents pure Being. We can best describe His nature as "Spirit" and His expression as "Will." He is the Kabalist's "Kether," because He is the first emanation or differentiation from the Absolute. He

is the Supreme, truly the Father, in that from Him, and from Him alone, emanate the "Divine Sons," sometimes referred to as sparks from the Eternal Flame. These are the imperishable spirits which go forth from the Father's home and take their journey "into a far country"—the incarnate souls which are earth's humanity. There are no words in the English language which can adequately describe these fragments of God. The Greek word *Monad* comes nearest to expressing the full significance of these units of divinity. In the most realistic sense, all creatures are His children, for within each resides this "Spark" or "Seed," which partakes of His very nature and essence. It is this divine "Will" within each individual self, which is the inherent urge to grow, to progress, to evolve. This aspect of God is sometimes referred to as the "Destroyer," for in the fullness of time all forms are eventually resolved into their native elements, and these Monads, which in the highest sense are humanity, find ultimate reunion with the Father.

## THE SON

The Second "Person" of the Trinity is usually referred to as "The Son." He is, as the Nicene Creed states, "The only-begotten Son of God." This particular phrasing has been responsible for much misunderstanding concerning the true state of His being. Charles W. Leadbeater in *The Christian Creed* interprets the original Greek as "the begotten only," or "the alone-born," which lifts it out of the realm of secular controversy. What can one say of Him whom untold millions worship, and by whom He is known as "The Christ?" In this Name lies the greatest mystery known to humanity; for the word *Christos* (Greek; meaning "the Anointed") is in reality a title rather than a name, title of a great office in the Spiritual Hierarchy of the world. To understand this fully, is to understand the meaning of the Incarnation, of the "Word which was in the beginning . . . and was made flesh and dwelt among us." Since He is God incarnate in human form, He thereby becomes Mediator between man and God. In His divine aspect, we describe Him as Life and Love—Life that permeates and sustains all forms; Love that unites all creatures, great and small, into one brotherhood. As the Father functions as Will on the Atmic or spiritual level, in like manner does the Son function as Love-Wisdom at the Buddhic or intuitional level. Whether we think of Him in His Cosmic aspect as the Second Logos, "by whose eternal sacrifice the universe is nourished and sustained," or as that essence of God embodied in every human soul—if we hold in our mind His image as the "Word" Incarnate, the Lord of Love—we touch the mystery whereby the several layers, or shall we say phases, of His manifestation become so unified and interlocked as to be truly One Christ.

## THE HOLY GHOST

When we come to describe the nature of the Third Person of the Trinity, we find ourselves at a loss for words. He is not so readily thought of as a "Person" as are the Father and the Son. We are inclined to think of Him vaguely as a kind of force or influence emanating from the Father. References to Him in both the Old and New Testaments as the "Spirit of the Lord," the "Spirit of Truth," the "Comforter," etc., leave our ideas indefinite. Certain physical phenomena are attributed to Him: the spirit of God upon the tongues of the prophets, the spirit descending as a dove at the baptism of Jesus, the "rush of a mighty wind," and the "cloven tongues like as of fire" which "sat upon the disciples" at the day of Pentecost, followed by the speaking and understanding of strange languages. These are poetic and symbolic attempts at description, where realistic prose falters. And yet, by the use of that faculty which transcends the intellect, we may discover certain less obvious guideposts which clearly indicate that it is actually the Third Person of the Trinity which, both in His nature and in His function, comes closer to mankind in a personal way than appears on the surface.

As the Father has to do with the Self or Spirit in the human being, and the Son, through the mystery of the Incarnation, reveals our relationship with God, it would not be difficult to accept the conclusion that the Holy Ghost, as the spirit of truth and understanding, is most intimately associated with our relationship with humanity and the world around us. In this connection it is significant to note that, while the Father aspect expresses itself primarily on the Atmic, (spiritual) level, the Son at the Buddhic (intuitional) level, the work of the Holy Ghost finds its channel through the third descending plane, the Manasic (higher mental) level, the world of abstract thought and pure reason. We recall that most abstruse statement in the above-mentioned Nicene Creed that though the Son was "begotten only of his Father before all worlds," the Holy Ghost as the "Lord and Giver of Life, proceedeth from the Father and the Son." Could it be that the framers of that famous document had some realization that the Three Persons of the Trinity revealed themselves respectively through three descending worlds of manifestation, and that the Third "Person" operated through the lowest of these planes—the one most intimately, and intricately, affecting humanity?

We carry our analogy to the point where it affects humanity. The Father, we have seen, is the spirit in man and appears as will. The Son is the principle of the intuition and is expressed as love and wisdom. The Holy Ghost, especially associated with the Manasic principle, works through our mental faculties, anciently referred to as the "Fire of the Mind." He is that phase of Deity which is often referred to as the "Divine Mind." The world scene is His field of activity, and His method of influencing world

affairs and guiding civilizations is through His creative images emanating from His own plane of activity, the archetypal world. Our own higher mind, reaching upward into this world of ideas and ideals, brings these images down into the world of daily affairs. Thus does the influence of the Holy Ghost extend into every sphere of human activity: science, philosophy, art, literature, philanthropy, sociology – and even world politics. Surely no aspect of Deity could be closer to our personal lives.

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