

Some Answered Questions, The Trinity

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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The Trinity

Question: What is the meaning of the Trinity and of its three Persons?

Answer: The reality of the Divinity is sanctified and exalted beyond the comprehension of all created things, can in no wise be imagined by mortal mind and understanding, and transcends all human conception. That reality admits of no division, for division and multiplicity are among the characteristics of created and hence contingent things, and not accidents impinging upon the Necessary Being.

The reality of the Divinity is sanctified above singleness, then how much more above plurality. For that divine reality to descend into stations and degrees would be tantamount to deficiency, contrary to perfection, and utterly impossible. It has ever been, and will ever remain, in the loftiest heights of sanctity and purity. All that is mentioned regarding the manifestation and revelation of God pertains to the effulgence of His light and not to a descent into the degrees of existence.



God is pure perfection and the creation is absolute imperfection. For God to descend into the degrees of existence would be the greatest of imperfections; rather, His manifestation, dawning, and effulgence are even as the appearance of the sun in a clear, bright, and polished mirror.

All created things are resplendent signs of God. For instance, the rays of the sun shine upon all earthly things, yet the light that falls upon the plains, the mountains, the trees and fruits is only in such measure as to make them visible, to ensure their growth, and to cause them to attain the object of their existence. The Perfect Man, however, is even as a clear mirror in which the Sun of Truth is revealed and manifested in the fullness of its attributes and perfections. Thus the reality of Christ was a bright and polished mirror of the greatest purity and clarity. The Sun of Truth, the Essence of the Divinity, appeared in that mirror and manifested its light and heat therein, yet it did not descend from the heights of holiness and the heaven of sanctity to reside within it. No, it continues to abide in its loftiness and sublimity, but has been revealed and manifested in the mirror in all its beauty and perfection.

Now, if we were to say that we have beheld the Sun in two mirrors—one Christ and the other the Holy Spirit—or, in other words, that we have seen three Suns—one in heaven and two upon the earth—we would be speaking the truth. And if we were to say that there is only one Sun, that it is absolute singleness, and that it has no peer or partner, we would again be speaking the truth.



TRANSLATION



The purport of our words is that the reality of Christ was a clear mirror wherein the Sun of Truth—that is, the divine Essence—appeared and shone forth with infinite perfections and attributes. It is not that the Sun, which is the Essence of the Divinity, was ever divided or multiplied—for it remains one—but it became manifest in the mirror. That is why Christ said, “The Father is in the Son”, meaning that that Sun is manifest and visible in this mirror.

The Holy Spirit is the outpouring grace of God which was revealed and manifested in the reality of Christ. Prophethood is the station of the heart of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the station of His spirit. It is thus evident and established that the Essence of the Divinity is absolute oneness and has no peer, equal, or likeness.

This is the true meaning of the three Persons of the Trinity. Otherwise, the foundations of the religion of God would rest upon an illogical proposition which no mind could ever conceive, and how could the mind be required to believe a thing which it cannot conceive? Such a thing could not be grasped by human reason—how much less be clothed in an intelligible form—but would remain sheer fancy.

Now, this explanation clarifies the meaning of the three Persons of the Trinity and establishes at the same time the oneness of God.