

# GOD MANIFEST

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The triangle is the ancient symbol for God. It is a particularly fitting emblem with which to picture God in that there is no geometric figure with fewer straight lines which encloses an area. One or two straight lines cannot do so. Any area bounded by straight lines must have a minimum of three sides. In Church Symbolism we find the following remarkable analysis:

*The equilateral triangle...with its apex upward is one of the oldest of the Trinity emblems. Its sides are equal, its angles equal, and it carries with it the idea of unity, because it has three sides and three angles which are identical to one another in every respect, and yet are three distinct sides and angles. They are combined so as to form not three figures, but one figure. The equality of the three distinct sides and angles expresses the equality of the three distinct Persons. Their union, resulting in but one figure, suggests the one and inseparable Divine Essence.*

It is also remarkable that the Jews them-selves, even in their steadfast adherence to the truth of the absolute oneness of God, used the two intersecting triangles in the Shield of David to represent their God and Messiah.

Dr. Georgia Harkness in her book, *What Christians Believe*, reveals rare insight into the problem posed to discerning Christians through the use of such terms as persons and trinity to describe God. We should note that she refers to contemporary polytheistic connotations of the words trinity and persons.

It is a serious misunderstanding to think of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three separate deities. This would be polytheism, not monotheism; it would be tritheism, not the Christian Trinity. It is not surprising that this mistake has been made, for Christians have often spoken of "God in three persons," and one of the great Christian hymns contains the refrain:

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

What the "three persons" meant originally, and what this ought to mean today, is "God in three manifestations," or forms of self-disclosure. What the word "person" in this connection means is suggested by the Latin phrase "dramatis personae," the characters of a drama; hence, the most accurate understanding might be the "roles" of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the great drama of divine revelation and man's salvation. Thus it is quite possible to think of the one God –the only God– as coming to us in three vital, even indispensable, ways.

The authoritative Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics reinforces this view with the following observations:

*It should, perhaps, be emphasized that the Trinitarian statement is never tri-theistic, in the sense of affirming three separate self-conscious and self-determining individualities in the God-head. When it is affirmed that there are three Persons in one God, the word "person" is used archaically, and not in the modern sense of a centre or core of personality. It was a word employed by Tertullian as on the whole the best word by which to convey the idea of an inner principle of distinction or individuation ... and it was a good enough word when it bore a vaguer and more flexible meaning than it bears nowadays in Western Europe. To say that there are three separate personalities in the Godhead would be polytheism. To say that there are three eternal principles of distinction or modes of subsistence in the Godhead is not polytheism – although in the speculative construction of the Trinity it might lead, and has sometimes led, to a theoretical pluralism or polytheism.<sup>1</sup>*

## SO WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US?

Standing on the monotheism of God. We do not deny the Father, or the Holy Spirit. The gospel are full of reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But that does not make polytheism of Christianity.

## HE AND HE ALONE IS THE CREATOR.

*Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; Isaiah 44:24 (kjb)*

## HE AND HE ALONE IS THE SAVIOR.

*Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. Isaiah 43:10-11 (kjb)*

## HE AND HE ALONE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT.

*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:24 (kjb)*



*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; Ephesians 4:4 (kjv)*

The one "Spirit" is interchangeably called "the (holy) Spirit," "the Spirit of God," and "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9). James Hastings in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* puts the whole matter succinctly as the following quote reveals.

*The Spirit is the immanent God Himself, working more freely in the souls of men as righteousness and power because of the new channels of influence He has opened up for Himself through Jesus Christ. In short, God Himself is the Father revealed; God Himself is in Christ revealing; God Himself is the Holy Spirit abiding.*

Dr. Harkness, with rare insight, points out that the New Testament writers made no distinction of any "persons" in their use of the titles referring to God.

*But what do we mean by the Holy Spirit, the third "person" of the Trinity? Again, we must guard against thinking of a third God. The Holy Spirit is the same God, the infinite and eternal God, acting in our lives, present with us, right here and now.*

*As the manifestation of God incarnate in human form, Jesus could be only in one place and for a relatively short time. Therefore he promised, and God gave, another manifestation that could be present in every place and to the end of time. Thus the Holy Spirit may be thought of as the living Christ, not the human Jesus, but the divine Spirit within him that made him God incarnate. God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three disclosures to us of one divinity... It is significant that in the earliest New Testament writings –the letters of Paul– the terms "Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Jesus Christ," or simply Christ, or the Lord, or the Spirit are used interchangeably and apparently with the same meaning. From his experience as a Christian before any theological doctrine of the Trinity was formulated, Paul found it natural to think of "the Lord" as God the Father, or as Jesus Christ the Son of God, or as the Holy Spirit. And so may we.*

The one God is scripturally seen, therefore, as Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit; or, as I John 5:7 says, as Father, Word, and Holy Ghost. This the triangle shows: it encloses but one area, yet that area is seen from three sides or manifestations.

*Christians believe in the unity of the one true God. As Father he loves men with infinite compassion; in Jesus Christ we see him revealed most clearly; through the Holy Spirit we feel his presence, are guided by his wisdom, and sustained by his strength. Yet he is one God, never three, whom we find in our experience in these three major ways.*

Bible Christians join with the Jews in declaring the truth of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One'."

We do not need to make enemies of other Christians who explain or describe this differently. We simply need to emphasize the truth of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One'."