

NOT THREE ASPECTS OF GOD

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Who is our God? How should we think of God? We know the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not three persons, because God is one person. In the New Church He is often called Divine Human. However, if not three persons, then how do we explain what Father, Son and Holy Spirit really mean? How many of us have simply said—they are three aspects of God?

There is a real trinity or three-ness in God, and it is the same three-ness all human beings have: soul, body, and active influence (See *True Christian Religion* 165-169 for a good summary). The core of any person is the soul—our spirit and mind, how we really feel, care and love deep inside ourselves; and also what we truly think inside, in our own freedom and rationality. Our soul is our primary or ruling love—what we love above all else.

Our soul is the real human being. Nevertheless, our souls would be helpless unless they had bodies to express and show what our soul is, and to act on our wishes. Our bodies live from our soul. It is through our bodies that we do things and contact other people's souls. It is through our bodies that we can see each other. That is why angels have spiritual bodies, to express their souls. A soul never exists by itself, but always has a body, to show itself and carry out its wishes.

Finally, to be human we must be able to have outside influence, to go beyond ourselves, through doing and saying things that actually affect others. A soul and body that could never reach out and touch other people would mean a totally

isolated life. To be human, life must mean we can have effects on other people, through our actions and sayings, our looks, our mood, the spiritual aura flowing from our loves. We influence others because our minds and hearts go out through our bodily actions and are felt—for good or for bad—by others. Though people sometimes abuse this ability, its purpose is that we may love each other, and be actively loved by others.

The Lord God is Human—it is in His image that He made us human. His soul is Jehovah—infinite love and wisdom that created the universe and preserves it. That is our “Father,” but that alone is invisible—“Someone” we cannot know. The Lord God’s body is Jesus Christ—the human form that Jehovah God took on by being born of a virgin. During life on earth, He made His body Divine, or “glorified” it: He made Himself the Divine love in human form. It is in Jesus Christ that we can see God. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14.6) Jesus Christ is the body and face of God.

In addition, the Holy Spirit is His Divinely active influence. He touches all human beings and reaches out to uplift us towards Himself, by flowing into us with love and light—good feelings and ideas we can grasp and use. The Lord’s Holy Spirit or activity is also called His proceeding, His operation, and His Divine providence. All these mean the inflowing activity of our Creator God, acting through His body Jesus Christ.

This is the New Church trinity. The Writings do not say Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “three aspects” of God, and we really should not say that either. Although “three aspects” may seem an easy way to avoid the mistake of three Divine persons, in fact it is not true. It also lines up the New Church with the ancient heresy of “modalism”—that “Father, Son, Holy Spirit” are just

three different modes or ways that God appears. This is an old idea in Christianity, but false, and it moves God away from our sight and makes him a kind of chameleon who changes how He looks. Since an aspect is an appearance or a way of looking at something, modalism can also mean the trinity is not something that is inherent in God, but a matter of how we look at Him—that is, the trinity or three-ness is not anything actually in God, but in how we see Him.

The New Church is sometimes called modalist (wrongly!), and we open ourselves to this when we say Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “three aspects” of God. Sometimes we are called modalist because they do not know what else to do with our denial of three distinct persons while we affirm Jesus’ full Divinity. Historically, only the modalists did that. Often Christians say, “three aspects” of God too, not realizing what it means.

It is important that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are much more than three of God’s aspects, appearances or names. They are the three essentials of one Divine Human Being—soul, body, and activity/influence. No one—not even God—can be human without all three of these. Talking about the New Church trinity is a great opportunity to show how the New Church idea of God and His incarnation is new, yet Biblical, is simple, and makes sense.

“Father, all things of mine are yours, and all of yours are mine.” What does this mean, if not that the Father's Divine belongs to the Son's Human, and the Son's Human to the Father's Divine? Consequently in Christ God is man and man is God, and thus they make one as soul and body make one....It is plain from this that the Father's Divine is the Son's soul, and the Son's Human is the Father's body. (*True Christian Religion* 122:4,5)