

Unity and the Trinity

Good morning and happy St. Patrick's Day. On this day of wearing the green I am compelled to note that the patron saint of Ireland was in fact Scottish—as I am. I am no saint but truth be told, Patrick had some interesting moments also. But we're not talking about Patrick so much today except that he used the shamrock with its three leaves to teach the pagan and druid nation about the threefold nature of God usually referred to as The Trinity.

Like some of you, I grew up singing “Holy, Holy, Holy” which ends, “God in three persons, blessed trinity”. Was I the only one confused by this? Everyone said I'd grow out of it but I didn't. Before I get too far into the details I want to point out the power of three. ** This is something I stumbled upon many years ago but it has been powerful for me. A triangle, with its three sides, is the smallest number of sides that will make a shape AND it is the shape used to strengthen architecture. If you want to strengthen a bridge or a wall or a fence, put some beams in a triangle and it will reinforce the structure. So I have come to think of trinities as a strengthening for my spiritual foundation. It's a leap I know. Because then I get to Unity and we affirm “There is only ONE presence and ONE power”. So you might think Unity doesn't have any trinity beliefs. Au contraire!

**Let's start with the three person, traditional trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although I always heard Holy Ghost and that confused me—how can you tell the holy ones in the dark? One way I came to think of this with a science metaphor is more like the three phases of water: Liquid, Steam and Ice. Liquid is Father, big as the ocean. Holy Spirit is Steam, active and elusive. Son is Ice, God incarnate in something solid and touchable. All of these are phases are water and all of these phases can be God. The movie The Shack portrays God as literally three different people, which is interesting to watch play out with the main character. But that is not a Unity view.

This trinity is how **I often talk about the trinity of God. It is **not** something you will find in a Unity book. Allness is the transcendent, infinite, unknowable substance nature of God. Isness is the dynamic, creating, power expressing energy nature of God. Eachness is the incarnate, divine nature of God available within each of us, although less progressive Christianity limits the incarnate to Jesus alone.

Some might say the Allness is like Father/Mother/God. Some might be comfortable with Isness as Holy Spirit. And Unity traditionally would refer to the Eachness as the Christ, our true self, our divine self. Some might say Rev. Joy just likes to make stuff up. Which I do. But it's not just me. You can find this language in Butterworth and Richard Rohr and Rabbi David Cooper. Last week we talked about science and spirituality and I said I liked both. This trinity and how it fits with the water metaphor grounds me in a spiritual trinity that is relatable and understandable. Rohr's language of the "divine dance" in the trinity is perfect as I think about the electron and the proton and the great empty space in every atom. They are not static. Quantum physics reveals possibilities in the energy and space of all there is. So this trinity language works for me. But let's get back to basic Unity.

**Just as Patrick used a familiar object, the shamrock, as a tool to teach the Irish about the trinity, Charles Fillmore used a familiar object, the trinity, as a tool to teach folks about his ideas of Divine Mind and the Creative Process he saw as the core of all life and manifestation.

Fillmore begins with God. "God is first in the Trinity. God is mind and is everywhere present. God is principle, law, Being, Spirit, All-Good, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchangeable, Creator, Father, cause and source of all that is." Then he moves to the Son, or Idea. "As the son is to the father, so is the idea to the mind." Fillmore clarifies, "The Christ is God's divine idea of humankind, the embodiment of all divine ideas existing in the mind of Being." Finally Fillmore says, "The Holy Spirit is...the whole Spirit of God in action. [I]n that action God appears as having individuality. It is neither the all of Being nor the fullness of Christ, but is an emanation, or breath, sent forth to do a definite work." In Jesus Christ Heals, Charles tries to tie this together a bit: "[T]here is one universal Mind, the source and sole origin of all real intelligence. First is mind, then mind expresses itself in ideas, then the ideas make themselves manifest. This is a metaphysical statement of the divine Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

One thing that is critical to understanding Fillmore's concept of the trinity of creation is perceiving The Christ of our being, as the middle, the channel or portal of God through which the Holy Spirit works and all things come into manifest being. This is the emphasis of our consciousness and awareness of our creative power. Fillmore says, "Throw yourself out of the Holy Trinity and you become an onlooker. Throw yourself into the Trinity and you become its avenue of expression." And there I can agree with Fillmore.

Spirit works **through** our lives rather than the onlooker's perception that a God *out there* directs what happens **to** our lives.

**Unity got so excited about the success of the Creative Process Trinity, that we created some more trinities! Anyone seen that truck commercial that says anything that comes in threes is better? So Fillmore got busy with the threefold nature of humankind. You may have heard this trinity if you have been around Unity awhile. For those who are new, let me just start at a basic level. In Christian Healing, Fillmore says, "The mind of humankind is Spirit, soul and body—not separate from God Mind but existing in it and making it manifest in an identity peculiar to the individual. Every person is building into consciousness the three departments of God Mind, and success in the process is evidenced by the harmony, in consciousness, of Spirit, soul and body."

So like a wave in the ocean, we exist in God Mind. In Jesus Christ Heals, I think Fillmore provided a little clearer idea of how the threefold nature works: "Humankind sets into action any of the three realms of being, Spirit, soul and body, by concentrating thought on them. If we think of the body, the physical senses encompass all our existence. If mind and emotion are cultivated we add soul to our consciousness. If we rise to the Absolute and comprehend Spirit, we round out the God-person."

Let me try an example. Often, when we operate only from our body, we may not be engaging consciousness much at all. Sometimes we call that operating from reptilian brain or the amygdala. Imagine someone cuts you off in traffic. I know that can be hard to imagine but let's just pretend. Without thinking at all, we feel threatened and we shout, honk the horn, make hand gestures: I don't know what your lizard brain is capable of. We see a threat and we react imagining we are protecting ourselves. Now if we add soul to our consciousness we might be able to see the other car and feel the feelings rising up and acknowledge, "Oh, I am getting angry. I probably shouldn't honk or make hand gestures. I choose peace. Let me breathe." If in that breath we can rise to our Spirit self we might be able to move to, "I am saying a little prayer for that person. I hope Spirit guides them to their destination and blesses them." Success in integrating our three departments is evidenced when we are calm, healthy, and maybe in service to others. Many of us have heard, "I have a body but I'm not my body. I have thoughts and feelings but I'm not my thoughts and feelings. I am a spiritual being having a human experience."

That is just another way of summarizing that we have access to information from our senses, our conscious and emotional awareness AND our connection to spiritual insight. Which brings us to the last trinity.

**In the three phases of consciousness, we have to begin, once again, with the premise that our minds exist within Divine Mind. Human Psychology focuses on conscious and subconscious mind. Spirituality adds the aspect of Superconscious or access to Divine Mind. Not three minds but aspects of humankind's consciousness. Each of these phases also exists in a dynamic relationship to the other two.

We'll start with the easy one: Conscious mind. Fillmore says, "The conscious mind makes one know of one's mental operations. It is that phase of mind in which one is actively aware of one's thoughts. It is the mind through which we establish our identity. The conscious mind **should** look ever to the superconscious for all direction and instruction. The Spirit of wisdom rests in the superconscious." So in this quote we learn about Superconscious AND a caution. If we consciously are not tuned into our body and we're not looking to Superconscious, where might our awareness turn?

"The subconscious mind, or subjective sub-consciousness, is the sum of all humankind's past thinking." Fillmore goes on to say, "All our involuntary or automatic activities are of the subconscious mind; they are the result of our having trained ourselves by the conscious mind to form certain habits and do certain things without having to center our thought upon them consciously." When we go on auto-pilot, our subconscious is steering us.

Now remember I said there is a dynamic relationship. Consciousness can be fed by subconscious or Superconscious and we consciously direct that. Here is an interesting Fillmore idea: "The subconscious acts upon what is given it through the conscious **or** Superconscious mind." Fillmore feels that humankind has messed up the whole consciousness plan. He says, "The subconscious may be called the sensitive plate of the mind. Its true office is to receive impressions from the superconscious and to reproduce [those impressions] upon the canvas of the conscious mind. Humankind, however, having **lost** the consciousness of the indwelling God as an ever present reality, has reversed the process and impresses the subconscious from the conscious mind." And basically Fillmore says, we fill our subconscious with the thoughts of duality we consciously held at the time of the experience and then draw upon the subconscious to continue our patterns of judging duality.

There is a way to re-activate Superconscious impressions—but I'm going to save that for another sermon!

So hopefully, I have once again made things clear as mud! These trinities are foundational to Unity's practical principles. So maybe this summer we'll dwell on each trinity, one at a time.

For today I want to introduce you to the idea that just as traditional Christianity borrows stories from myth and legend and transforms them into aspects of God; sometimes Unity borrows what feels familiar from traditional Christianity and transforms it into something fresh and different that we try to make practical. In every approach, you have to find what speaks to you. Take it apart. Question it. Leave space for mystery. Figure out what strengthens your spirituality.