

THE HOLY GHOST¹

BY

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Qui confessioni Patris et Filii connexus est non potest a confessione Patris et Filii separari. (St Hilary, *De Trinitate*, II. 29.)

BY an age-old tradition philosophers have included among their works a treatise on Friendship. Plato wrote one, Aristotle wrote one, Cicero too, and St Aelred of Rievaulx wrote one—on Christian friendship, and there have been others. There is a popular idea that men of great speculative ability and contemplative gifts are very remote from the society of their fellow men; but in view of all these writings it would seem that they had a more highly developed appreciation of that society than many another. Now if a Christian wants to say his last word on friendship, on community of thought and feeling and the happiness and blessings which they bring, he will have to say his say about the Blessed Trinity. That subject is not one which belongs only to theological class-rooms where the chalk-dust lies inches deep, not merely to the pages of vellum folios which, though very handsome on the shelves of a university library, no one takes down and few could read even if they did. It is a subject which quite clearly belongs to you and me and everyone else who claims to say with sincerity, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen'. It was to people like us that St Paul wrote: 'Hope does not delude us; the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom we have received'. (Rom. 5, 5). 'The kingdom of God . . . means rightness of heart, finding our peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Such is the badge of Christ's service which wins acceptance with God, and the good opinion of our fellow-men'. (idem. 14, 17; cf. 15, 13 and 16; 1 Cor. 2, 13.) 'Surely you know that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you. And he is God's gift to you' . . . (1 Cor. 19; cf. 12, 3; 2 Cor. 6, 6; 13, 14; 1 Thess. 1, 5-6; 2 Tim. 1, 14.) 'In accordance with his own merciful design he (God) cleansed us, giving us new birth, and restoring our nature through the Holy Ghost, shed on us in abundant measure through our Saviour Jesus Christ' (Tit. 3, 5)—so . . . we were to become heirs, with the hope of eternal life set before us.

These are only a few of the references to the Holy Spirit in the

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New Testament, only a few even of St Paul's. Do you notice this about them: they mention hope, love, peace, joy, gifts? Is not that a language which breathes friendship in every word? Friends can rely on each other, they love each other, they find peace in each other's company, they are glad to be together, they give presents to each other. And where these things are, there is friendship. You may have remarked that this is not one of those too exclusive friendships which is a torment to the friends because the claims of other people have to be satisfied, and a bore to everyone else because they are always being pushed away. There are more than two people in it. You and the Holy Spirit . . . but St Paul says that *God* has given him to us, and has done so through our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps this is the place to remember that it was the latter who said: 'Now I have called you no more servants but I have called you friends'; and, just before, 'If you have any love for me, you must keep the commandments which I give you; and then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another to befriend you, one who is to dwell continually with you for ever. It is the truth-giving Spirit, for whom the world can find no room, because it cannot see him, cannot recognise him. But you are to recognise him; he will be continually at your side, nay, he will be in you. I will not leave you friendless; I am coming to you. . . . When that day comes, you will learn for yourselves that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. . . . He who is to befriend you, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send on my account, will in his turn make everything plain, and recall to your minds everything I have said to you. Peace is my bequest to you' (John 14, 16 sqq.). Those words were said before St Paul penned his and perhaps I should have put them first. It is striking that the texts I choose at random from St Paul echo our Lord's words when he promises to send, from the Father, his truth-giving Spirit who will be in us, and befriend us, and set us at peace.

But does not your head begin to go round a little when you hear these words of one syllable? You begin to wonder who's who. He will befriend you; I am coming to you; the Father will send him; I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you. There seems to be a great deal of what we may call mutual inwardness. Is not that just what there is between close friends?

Our Lord's words that I have quoted suggest something very like that. As a matter of fact he was not content with saying it once, since, among friends, we do not mind hearing the same thing over and over again—indeed if you notice it, it is only the people we do not like that we ask to 'shut up' because we have heard it before or know it already. In John 10, 30 he says: 'I and the Father are

one'; and in verse 38: 'If you do not want to believe me, believe for the sake of my works, so that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father'. Then in chapter 14, 9-10 he says: 'Philip, he who sees me, seeth the Father also; how then do you say: Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? . . . The Father, dwelling in me; he does the works'. Just in the same way we find St Paul saying in 1 Cor. 2, 11: 'Who else can know a man's thoughts except the man's own spirit that is within him? So no one else can know God's thoughts, but the Spirit of God . . . viz. who is in him.

Three of them, all distinct, all God, all in each other with an intense mutual inwardness of friendship. That is what we mean and profess our faith in when we say 'In the name . . .' etc. First we say 'In the name', singular, then we go on to say three names of three Persons. We mean that they are such great friends that beyond all human possibility they have one single name denoting one single nature, while still keeping their distinct personalities and their personal names. We spoke of human friends occupying a large part of each other's thoughts and affections. These three occupy, so to speak, so much of each other's thought that it is only one mind they have; and they occupy so much of each other's affections that it is only one will they have; indeed they are so mutually *in* each other, that it is only one nature they have. You do not find human friends like that. You may call them inseparables, but they remain two beings as well as two people. You may say that they think alike, but there are two minds there. You may say that their wills are united in having the same likes and dislikes, but there are still two wills there. On the other hand you sometimes find that with people who have lived a great deal in company with each other their individual outlines seem to get a little blurred. They talk alike and even begin to look alike. There is no blurring of the three distinct persons in God, no loss of individuality. This is what we mean when we say in the Athanasian Creed that we believe in the Trinity, 'neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance'. It is what we mean when we say in the twenty-sixth answer of the Catechism: 'The three Persons are not three Gods: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are all one and the same God'. It is what we mean when we say, 'In the name . . .' etc. Yet I am quite sure that most of us do sometimes think of them, when we think of them, as three Gods, as though in spite of ourselves. It is because we forget the surpassing mutual inwardness of their divine friendship as shown us by our Lord. One reason why I have begun by saying all this is that I might avoid encouraging any tritheistic habit of thought by speaking only about one of the three

Persons, which might have suggested that he was a distinct being as well as a distinct Person. Another reason is that owing to their mutual inwardness you cannot properly understand one of them without taking account of the others. They imply each other's presence; call each other to our mind. Already perhaps, though so far we have only considered them altogether, you know more about the Holy Ghost and have clearer ideas with which you can appreciate him better, than you had.

It is time now that we try to see in what this one life of the three Persons consists. If we want to know what sort of people human friends are we find out about their origins, and what they do. It is a matter of tremendous interest, not to say excitement for us, because, as we have seen, their life is a life in which they give us a share and into which we are drawn. 'I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you'; and a text we have not mentioned: 'Those who follow the leading of God's spirit are all God's sons; the spirit you have now received is the spirit of adoption, which makes us cry out, Abba Father' (Rom. 8, 14). I said advisedly that in seeking information about human friends we enquire into their origins. It is quite true, and it is also quite the right way to enquire about the divine friends, because they are made known to us as originating, having their source, one from another, so that God the Son originates from God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost originates from God the Father and God the Son together. The best way for us to get some understanding of this is to turn for a short time to the highest creature of which we have experience, namely ourselves, and in regarding ourselves to look at the highest processes of our life, namely our activities of knowledge and love. Think, now, of something or someone you like. And next think of yourself thinking of that person. You find, do you not, that you have a mental image or picture of him? It is in your mind, yet it is not your mind. Your mind is a power of knowing all kinds of things, and there is a great deal more knowledge in it which you can rouse up and express in similar images if you want to. For the moment you have roused up from your memory and expressed in your mind this particular piece of knowledge. Because it is expressed in your mind, we will call that image a word, just as we call the sounds you make with your lips words. I also asked you to think of something or someone whom you liked. So next I want you to think of yourself liking him. You will find that a little more difficult to focus, but possible. It is more difficult because the will, which is our spiritual power of loving, though it is of the same spiritual nature as the mind, is not the mind, and so the mind can focus on itself in action more readily than it can on the

will. (And that is one reason why people find a difficulty in thinking about the Holy Ghost.) But you *are* conscious of your will being stirred at the presence of your mental image. There is a stirring, a bias, produced there—so that you could say you feel drawn towards what you are thinking of.

If you have managed these simple exercises in introspection you have some good material in terms of which you can begin to understand God's life of friendship between the three Persons, for you have the best available example to show you a glimmering of how they take their origin in God, whom they are. You think, and in thinking something goes on, proceeds, is expressed in your mind—a word. Have you ever heard this: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God'? It is of that Word that St John says a few verses later that he was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the *only begotten* of the Father, full of grace and truth. There you have the eternal expression, procession, of God the Son from God the Father. He is called the Word, and we can therefore view it after the manner of the expression of our mental words. They are not our sons, I know; but then you would expect God's Word to proceed in a much more perfect way than ours. Ours come forth at one moment, and recede at the next. God's is eternal—that is what is meant by 'In the beginning', or, as we say in the Nicene Creed, 'before all ages'. Our words are not human beings; there cannot be anything in God which is not God: that is why St John says: 'And the Word was God'. Our words are qualities of our minds, not persons; we speak of God as if he had qualities, but in his utterly simple and infinite perfection all his so-called qualities or attributes are the *same* as his being. It is only where there is a going on, a procession, an expression, that there is a distinction to be found in God, and where there is that, there is a distinct individual who is God, that is to say a divine Person. That is what we mean when we call the Word of God *Deum de Deo* in the Nicene Creed. Words are expressed in mind or speech to be like the thing known—in the case of self-knowledge, to represent the knower. In God's perfect self-knowledge his Word proceeds so as to be a perfect likeness of him—so perfect that speaker and word are both of the same kind, in fact Father and Son—so much of the same kind that unlike human fathers and sons they have but one and the same substance, nature and being.

You will already be guessing in what way we shall speak of the Holy Ghost. You expressed your mental word and thereupon something went on in your will, an attraction or a bias or an impulse

developed there. After that fashion the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. As he proceeds, he too is distinct; as he is *in* God, he too *is* God; as he is a distinct individual who is God, he too is a divine Person. But he is not a son; the Word is the only-begotten of the Father. For there is this difference between the mind and the will: the mind draws things into itself, and then refashions them, intelligibly, in those mental images we attended to, expressed precisely so as to be like the thing known and to serve as mirrors for our knowing. But the will is drawn outwards, to the thing loved, and that which is produced in it is not produced to be a likeness, but to be a bias. Now as a son proceeds as a likeness of his father, having the same specific human nature, with God the same identical divine nature, therefore the Holy Ghost, who is indeed like the Father and the Son, having with them the one divine nature, substance, being, but who does not proceed precisely as a likeness, is not called Son.

Now we can go on to see what the names of the Holy Ghost are. For every person has a name or names given him. Names are given to people to distinguish them from one another. Not that people are distinct because they have different names: but their names are intended to express and signify their distinction. So feeble is our power of knowledge that we cannot penetrate sufficiently into what it is precisely that makes you a different person from me, so as to be able to express that distinction in a name. Hence we are given an arbitrary selection of names, and even that combination too often proves not to be unique in the world. But the proper names of the divine Persons are truly expressive of that by which each of them is distinguished, namely their mode of originating. Father and Son are distinct, as we have seen, because they are the opposing terms of an intellectual procession. Word is another name proper to the Son, as indicating that which proceeds, intellectually. Another that belongs to him is Image (cf. Col. 1, 15) because an image is a perfect likeness proceeding from that of which it is an image and proceeding precisely as a likeness. We do not call one egg the image of another, because one egg does not proceed from another. We do call a statue of the king his image, because it proceeds from the king via the sculptor's idea of him so as to be like him. The mental word, too, images the thing known, being expressed by the knower. The Son perfectly expresses all that is the Father's. He is, as the Nicene Creed has it, *Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine*.

When we come to name the Holy Ghost we are in the difficulty which I foreshadowed when I explained why the goings-on within the will were somewhat obscure to the mind. The result is that the meaning of the names of him who proceeds after the manner of an

impulse of love in the will is not so immediately clear to us as is that of the names of the Father and the Son or Word. Father and Son are *spirit* and *holy*; he therefore who proceeds from them both as their common impulse of love has a name which is common to them, reserved to him properly, and the word 'procession' which is common to the mind-procession and the will-procession is reserved to his manner of originating. *Love* is also used as his proper name: it is with such difficulty that we distinguish the impulse within the will from the activity of the will that it is not hard to give them both the same name. But we must be careful to remember that if by love we mean the activity of the divine will, it is common to, identical in, numerically one in all three Persons. If on the other hand we mean that which proceeds in God from the Father and the Son, after the manner of an impulse of love, then it is being used as the proper name of the Holy Spirit—signifying again his own way of originating. We had better show how this provides the answer to a question which the theologians and the simplest faithful alike put to themselves: Do the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Spirit? We answer: if you ask whether he is the activity by which they love each other, the reply is no, for that activity is the one divine will; if you ask whether he is the impulse-or-love Person which together they breathe forth within their common exercise of divine love, the reply is, of course, yes. Because love is the root and the first of all other gifts, he is also called Gift. He is the common mutual Gift of the Father and the Son. We have to exchange gifts to show our mutual goodwill; such is the mutual inwardness of the Father and Son, that they are one source of one Gift. The nearest examples of this in our experience are the community of property among religious, who live off a common fund with nothing of their own, and the community of property between husband and wife—'with all my worldly goods I thee endow'. In each case this community of goods expresses their mutual love and charity, but the examples fall short because the parties are two or more beings, each exercising a numerically distinct love, from which moreover no person proceeds. Whereas in the exercise of their one mutual love the Father and the Son breathe forth a third Person who himself exercises the same love, and completes this intensity of personal relationship which is the one God.

Here I would say that there are many different combinations of ideas which we could use to describe this inner life of God which beggars all description. For this talk I have chosen to combine what the Greeks called *perichoresis* and the Latins *circumincessio*, which I have translated by 'mutual inwardness', with the psychological

analogies developed by St Augustine. Another, and fruitful, approach is by means of St Thomas's analysis of personality and relationship, which does not exclude the one I have chosen today, but amplifies it still further in the same sense. For the divine persons, though distinct individuals, are not, like human persons, distinct beings; they have and are one and the same being of God. If they were three things identified with the same nature and being the old objection would hold, that they could not be distinct. But as the terms of two *perfect* processions, in which there is no imperfection of succession, development or becoming, they are simply opposing relationships which exclude each other into distinction, but do not divide the substance or thing with which they are identified. Human persons are distinct individuals and distinct things which enter into relationship with each other, a process which signifies to us greater intensity of life. So intense and full is the life of the divine Persons that they simply are relationships, identified with the one thing—which is not to be thought of as a fourth individual, but as being in its turn simply the intense mutual life of the three individual relationships.

This name of Gift brings us to our concluding section, which concerns the dealings of the Trinity with us. For if the Holy Ghost is Gift, then he is giveable. Who can give him? Who but those from whom he proceeds, the Father and the Son? And to whom can they give him? To each other first and then to intellectual creatures who alone are capable of being raised by grace to share the knowledge which God has of himself. How does he come to them, this divine token of divine friendship? As an object of knowledge and love, which they can enjoy. Is not the Son, we might ask, given likewise? He is, by the Father from whom he proceeds, but he is not therefore properly called Gift, because he does not proceed as a love-impulse, but as a mental word. Cannot the Father, we might ask, be given likewise? This time we must answer no. He does not proceed from anyone, therefore there is no one to give him. But cannot we know and love him, as we know and love the Son and the Holy Spirit? Yes, for he comes to us, but is not given. 'If a man has any love for me, he will be true to my word; and then he will win my Father's love, and we will both come to him and make our continual abode with him' (John 14, 23). In causing us to exercise our faith and our charity the Father comes, the Son comes, the Holy Ghost comes; the Son comes and is sent and is given; the Holy Ghost comes, is sent and is given—and, because of the manner of his origination or procession, Gift is his proper name. I suggest that you might read for yourselves our Lord's discourse at the Last Supper,

John 14, 15, 16, and see how this is in his own language.

So far we have looked at our sanctification, our sharing in God's three-personal life, from the side of God. What about its effects in us, grace and its increase, the virtues of faith, hope and charity and the rest? To which of the three Persons do we owe them? Here it is important to state, what you will now readily perceive, that since there is but one mind, one will, one power in God, his created effects which are conceived by his mind, brought into being by his will and his power, are the common work of all three persons without distinction. Only because our life of grace is given to us through the sacred humanity of our Lord can we ascribe its provenance to him immediately, because his human nature was united in a special way to that divine individual, not to the other two. But that which he has done for us he has done in virtue of their one power. In another way we can ascribe our share in the divine life of friendship to the Holy Ghost, because it is a divine love-gift to us, as he is the divine love-gift *par excellence*. Further, it reaches its completion, its fullness, in the exercise of charity, and the inner life of God is complete in the procession of the Holy Ghost—who can therefore be called the fullness of the Trinity. Our sanctity is specially attributed to him, again, because *Holy Spirit* is reserved to him as a proper name. He is called by our Lord the truth-giving spirit who will guide us into all truth, because the more you love, the more you know and understand about those whom you love. Now we can see why in the Creed, all the part about the working out of our sanctification is put into connection with our belief in the Holy Ghost, and the events of our Lord's life, passion and resurrection are put in connection with the second person—to whom they are not merely attributed, but belong. Creation is assigned to the Father, though common to all three, because he proceeds from no one and all proceeds from him. In giving us the gift of grace and the powers of faith and charity, God opens to us his inner personal life, and puts us in possession, for love and enjoyment, of his Gift who is the Holy Ghost. In accepting that gift we become adopted into the Trinitarian society, that is to say adopted into an immediate relationship towards the Father, from whom all within that society proceeds—in other words adopted brothers of our Lord who has procured this Gift for us, adopted sons of the Father. Or you can take the matter the other way about and say the Father begets the Son, his image, and we are reborn, regenerated, in accord with that image, and so put in possession of their common Gift, the Holy Ghost.

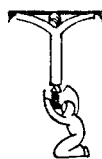
Henceforth our true life is to be an approaching to the Father, through the Son, in the unity, fellowship or communication of the Holy Ghost. That is the effective blessing, the re-creative *fiat* of God

that rests upon the Christian, and which St Paul wishes to the Christian (2 Cor. 13): 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the imparting of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen'. (The love of God—i.e. of the Father. For the Fatherhood of God holds the same pride of place as the sign of our admission to the divine life, in the New Testament. that the unity of God has in the Old. Hence the name God is usually attributed specially to the First Person in the New Testament—but attributed only—there is no ground for saying that he alone is God. or that the Persons are not in every way co-equal.) That, too, is how we say our prayers, as from within the divine friendship to which we have been admitted: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, qui tecum vivit et regnat, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

THE BLESSED TRINITY AND OUR ADOPTED SONSHIP ¹

BY

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HE mystery of the blessed Trinity is the most unfathomable of the articles of our faith; but it is likewise the most fruitful for our spiritual life. Many souls, nevertheless, even really interior ones, are more inclined to adore it than to strive to know it well. Doubtless they understand that God is within them, that he lives in them and bestows his grace on them; many even willingly recall that this God living in them is the one God in three persons; and they are overcome by a sweet emotion, a humble reverence when they realise that at every instant the great mystery of the generation of the Word by the Father, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the breathing forth of the mutual love of Father and Son, is accomplished in their heart. But generally their thoughts stop there.

This presence of the holy Trinity in us has, however, a much more profound signification. This God who dwells in me, *in making me to enter into the society of the three divine persons*, calls me to live with his own intimate life. He does not wish that my soul should remain simply a spellbound spectator of the splendours and riches of his life; he desires that it should 'enter into the joy of its Lord' (Matt. 25, 21), that it should be associated with the ineffable relations which the

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