

Christianity: The One, the Many **—Story of a New Book**

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Esotericists as a group show surprisingly little interest in organized religion, especially the persuasions of their upbringing. We may take pride in studying the Celtic/Druid traditions, the religions of Asia, or the indigenous religions of the Americas, Hawaii or Australia. Or we may dismiss religion altogether as “the path of aspiration,” distracting from what should now be a focus on discipleship and initiation. As a result, this author feels somewhat defensive in publishing a major work on Christianity¹ after four decades of esoteric studies that produced among much else the two books *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*.²

However, from time to time we sense pressure to take on an assignment from Those to whom we offer our services. At the outset the assignment’s purpose and relevance may be unclear, though we begin to understand it better as the work progresses. That is how *Christianity: The One, the Many* came to be written. The two-volume book is addressed to a broad audience of Christians, non-Christians, esotericists and skeptics. Esoteric students will find chapters on familiar topics and recognize familiar themes running throughout the book. Others may be introduced to esoteric concepts for the first time. Firm believers may be dismayed by frank acknowledgement of uncertainties, while skeptics may be surprised by sincere expression of faith. This is a bridging work. The book’s subtitle is *What Christianity might have been and could still become*.

Christianity: the One, the Many tries to answer questions like: Who was Jesus the Christ? What relevance does Christianity have in a “post-Christian” age? Why are there so many Christian sects and what are the prospects for healing the rifts among them? Does Christianity have a future? Can, or should, I be a Christian? Should you? It offers encouraging answers and possibilities for modern spiritual seekers who may be drawn to Christianity for the first time or, as in the author’s case, may be returning after a long journey through foreign lands.

The book explores the richness of the Christian experience, as it has unfolded over the last 2,000 years, and offers a bold vision for the future. The new vision honors diversity of beliefs and practices within Christianity as well as a transcendent, unifying reality. Seven spiritual paths are identified offering opportunities for expressing personal and collective aspirations. Archetypal in nature, and cutting across sectarian boundaries, the paths are: Devotion, Ceremony, Knowledge, Service, Healing, Activism and Renunciation. Esotericists will immediately recognize correspondences with the Seven Rays, and equivalences are duly noted in the text. However, the paths are of more general relevance and appeal. They are presented in a Christian context but should appeal to members of other world religions—or none—as well as to Christians of all persuasions.

The unifying reality is a larger, overarching archetype which Eastern Orthodox theologians, even when writing in English, call the *Ekklesia*. The *Ekklesia* is visualized as a great “Cathedral”—hence the cover design—into which all are invited to worship, love their neighbor, humbly seek truth, and work to make the world a better place. The denominations, sects and factions that comprise what we know as Christianity are simply partial manifestations of the *Ekklesia*. Many of them have great strengths, but they also have weaknesses inherent in the attempt to express a perfect Platonic Form in an imperfect world.

The book does not gloss over the “shadow side” of Christianity—or the many doubts and questions people have today or had in the past. But it ends on an optimistic note:

Whether we feel drawn to traditional or innovative forms of Christianity, we can all find a spiritual path within the Ekklesia. Some persuasions emphasize one path or another, but the seven paths are intrinsically free from denominational or factional associations. Moreover they are open to people at all levels of spiritual attainment and aspiration. Each path offers a distinctive way to express the presence of God and the love of Christ in our lives...

Whatever path we are on, and wherever we may be on our journeys, we are united in common ideals. We oppose injustice but aim to heal the world rather than resorting to violence. We seek truth but pause to reflect that what we discover can only be partial and time-dated. We renounce excess in our own lives but value the creation of great works of sacred artistic heritage. We strive to love all whom we meet, no matter how different they may be from ourselves. And we worship God and share in the love of Christ, realizing that both may be known by different names... Christianity is a communion of pilgrims inspired by the love and wisdom of the Christ...

Christianity is also a pilgrim on its own journey, ever striving to express its archetype more fully. The history of Christianity could be seen as a series of failures, missed opportunities, and incomplete successes. From another perspective we can see a success story that surpasses any other human creation, with or without divine support. The soul-searching made necessary by conditions in the modern world is giving the churches a new sense of their mission and identity. Christianity’s journey is not over. It has a bright future as the subjective union of denominations, congregations, communities and individuals under the leadership of Christ, pursuing their various paths and giving expression to their highest aspirations. We affirm Christianity’s own progress onward and upward for ever. The most glorious days lie ahead.³

Prominent Theosophists found ways to combine esoteric work with active participation in Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions. Moreover, Annie Besant reassures us: “Many... men and women, in East and West, have come back with joy to the religion in which they were born, in realising that it is only an expression of the one divine Wisdom, and that the Masters of the Wisdom live and move amongst us.”⁴

Christianity: the One, the Many was used as the basis of a graduate course at the Sancta Sophia Seminary in Oklahoma and currently is being discussed by a number of study groups. Feedback has been very encouraging. Evidently the book speaks to people of diverse religious, philosophical and cultural backgrounds. Hopefully it approximates what its Sponsors had in mind when the project began. The next assignment may be even more challenging. Further information on the book and its author can be found on the website: www.uriel.com.

¹ John F. Nash. *Christianity: The One, the Many*. Xlibris, 2007. Volume 1: 390 pages, volume 2: 372 pages. List price: paperback \$39.98, hardcover \$59.98. For ordering and other information see: www.uriel.com/bookstore.

² John Nash. *Quest for the Soul*. 1stBooks Library, 2004. John Nash. *The Soul and Its Destiny*. Authorhouse, 2004. The present author has published numerous articles, and also founded and serves as editor-in-chief of the *Esoteric Quarterly*.

³ Nash, *Christianity*, vol. 2, pp. 341-343.

⁴ Annie W. Besant. *London Lectures of 1907*. Arc Manor, 2008, p. 34.