ADVAYA-JNANA-TATTVA AND CHRISTIAN TRINITY
Sri Jíva's Ultimate Reality comprises three aspects or manifestations. Christian Ultimate Reality - God consists of three persons as Trinity. Unity of essence of the three admitted by both; by one as Sat, Cit, Ananda; and by the other as - being, understanding, goodness and love. Christian persons distinguished by three notions of paternity, filiation and procession. General notions of immascibility and spiration - not person constituting. Gauḍīya persons distinguished by graded manifestation of powers. Father - the 'principle', as origin: Son is not less. Father - unbegotten creator. Son as Word and Image. Son and Word both emanation of intellect of God. ’Word’ expressive of Father, but expressive and operative of creatures. Son - perfect image of Father. Man imperfect image of God. Holy Ghost - Love and Gift of God. Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit - common to Father and Son. Holy Spirit as two words applicable to Trinity. As one word 'Holy Ghost' signifies one person proceeding by way of Love: proceeds both from Father and Son. Father and Son love each other and creatures by Holy Ghost. Essence of Sat - Cit - Ananda somewhat similar with Christian being, understanding and love. Person-constituting factors entirely different. Dissimilarity of characteristics of three persons in both systems. Difference in the way of meditation. Christian persons almost equal, while Gauḍīya persons graded. Similarity of bhakti with Holy Ghost. Somewhat similarity of essence. Similarity in theistic outlook with devotion as highest means.
It is quite natural that while discussing any system of philosophy, scholars are tempted to find out parallel thoughts and views if available. We have found in course of discussing Śrī Jīva's philosophy that his view of the Ultimate Reality is imbued with the sense of some sort of trinity in the Ultimate Reality.

The Paratattva or Advaya-jñāna comprises three aspects or three persons, viz. Bhagavat, Paramātman and Brahman, though the last one is considered by the jñānins to be impersonal.

Therefore, the query arises whether this trinity in the Ultimate Reality or three aspects of God have any similarity or common point with the Christian theological philosophy which holds the Ultimate Reality of God as comprising of three persons or Trinity.

In order to answer this query, and find out the common points or differences of the views, we must have a clear conception of the Christian view of the Trinity. According to the Christian theology, though God has only one essence, He consists of three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Since, there is only one essence of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are not different things though they are different persons (1).

This idea of essential unity, of course, agrees with Śrī Jīva's conception of the substantial unity of the three aspects of the

Divinity in the essence or substance - Sat, Cit and Ananda or (Self-conscious) Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. In the case of the Christian Trinity the essence or the substance is God's being and God's Intellect (understanding). "His essence does not differ from His being" (2). Again - "In God to be is the same thing as to understand. But God's being is His substance ..... Therefore, the act of God's intellect (understanding) is His substance" (3). Goodness is also His essence in as much as "Goodness and being are really the same and differ only in idea (4). "Goodness does not add anything to being beyond the aspect of desirability and perfection" (5). Love may also be regarded as the essence of God when taken essentially and not personally. Personally Love is the proper name of the Holy Ghost (6 .).

But the three persons of the Christian Trinity are distinct persons distinguished by the notions of paternity, filiation and procession which are the three personal or person-constituting notions in God (6A). There are other two notions also in God, viz. immascibility and spiration which are not personal or person-constituting though they may be notions about the persons. Therefore, the distinction of the persons are due to three notions or in three properties i.e. in the paternal, the filial and the processional.

(2) The Summa Theologica - Vol.I Page 30
(3) Ibid Page 140
(4) Ibid Page 41.
(5) Ibid Page 46.
(6) Ibid Page 333.
(6A) Ibid Page 322.
It follows that the three persons have their distinction only on notional and relational basis.

But, we know that the three personalities according to the Gauḍīya Vaishnavism have their difference due to the difference of adjectives, i.e. due to the difference of manifestation of sakti or powers.

The person of the Father is said to be the Principle of others only because the Son and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father. But this does not attribute any kind of subjection or inferiority to the Son or to the Holy Ghost. The term principle here does not signify priority but origin, "Nevertheless, the Son is not less, to whom oneness of nature is given" (7).

The Father is also unbegotten in the sense that He does not proceed by the procession of the Holy Ghost because of being the principle of generation.

The other person in God is the Son who is also called the Word or the Image. The idea of the person as the Son is gathered from the idea of Father. The notion of filiation, as already said, constitutes the person of the Son though essentially the Son is one with the Father. The name Word ascribed to the Son is also a personal aspect of God and not essential aspect (8).

Just, as the person who proceeds in God by way of an emanation of the intellect of God is called the Son, so, Word also signifies

(8) Ibid - Page 334.
an emanation of the intellect. Hence, the Son is properly called "Word" in God (9).

This name (Word) of the Son signifies not only relation to the Father but also relation to all beings made through the Word by His operative power. Thus, Word is expressive not only of the Father but of all creatures. But, while Word is only expressive of the Father, it is both expressive and operative of creatures. So, it is said "He spake and they were made". The Son or the Word is also called the creator begotten. So also the name Word expresses relation to creatures.

Image is also another name for the Son. The word image may have two meanings. The image of the King is found in his Son. In another way it is found in something of different nature - as the King's image on the coin.

"In the first sense the Son is the Image of the Father. In the second sense Man is called 'the image' but 'to the image'; whereby is expressed a certain movement of one tending to perfection. He (Son) is the perfect image of the Father" (10).

The other person in God constituting the Trinity is the Holy Ghost. It is also called the Love and Gift of God. It is the notion of procession which constitutes the personality of the Holy Ghost.

(9) The Summa Theologica - Vol.I Page 336
(10) Ibid Page 341.
Holiness is attributed to whatever pertains to God, and since Love implies some movement or procession, it is spirit. The Holy Ghost is common to both, for, the Father is a spirit and the Son is a spirit; and the Father is holy and the Son is holy.

The expression holy spirit if taken as two words is applicable to the whole Trinity. But if it is taken as one word the expression signifies only one of the three persons — the one who proceeds by way of love. The Holy Ghost is not made or created or begotten but it proceeds from the Father and the Son.

The Son proceeds as an emanation of intellect as Word, and the Holy Ghost by way of the will as love. But we do not love anything unless we apprehend it by a mental conception which implies Word. So love proceeds from word. Therefore, it may be said that the Holy Ghost proceeds as love not only from the Father but also from the Son who is the Word (11).

The Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Ghost (12). Again, the Father loves not only the Son but also Himself and us by the Holy Ghost (13).

Gift is also another personal name for the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost to be the Gift of God is to proceed from the Father and Son. So, the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and Son. Therefore, Gift is the proper name of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Gift of (as) the Holy Ghost is nothing but the Holy Ghost (14) which is the person of love.

--- 189 ---

(12) Ibid Page 357
(13) Ibid Page 358
(14) Ibid Page 359
Thus, the essential unity of the Trinity (or the three persons) as being, understanding (intellect), love, and goodness constitutes the substance of the three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost whose distinction of personality is maintained by the notions or relations of paternity, filiation, and procession.

But, in Śrī Jīva's philosophy, we have found that though the substance of the three persons (Puruṣa) as existence, consciousness, and bliss is somewhat similar to the Christian concept of the essence, still the factors constituting the difference of the persons Bhagavat, Paramātman and Brahman, are entirely different from the person-constituting notions or relations of the Christians. While the Father of the Christian Trinity is characterised by paternity, principlehood, being the only unbegotten creator, the Bhagavat of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is a person with entirely different characteristics without any direct relation with creatorhood. Though Bhagavat may be the principle in some sense, yet the supreme relational aspect of Bhagavat is not paternity but kanta-hood or the character of being the supreme beloved as all in all (sarvaṣvayamāna). The person-constituting characteristics in Bhagavat are His supreme powers and attributes in their fullest manifestation as supreme bliss, love, beauty and sweetness (mādhurya). The power of svarūpa-śakti or Cit-śakti is also completely manifested in Him.

Again, Paramātman who is the direct creator of the universe, according to the Gauḍīyas, cannot be compared to the Father or the Son, because, Paramātman is not unbegotten like the Father, nor is...
He begotten with the characteristic of Son-hood. Though the Son is also the creator being the 'Word', still the Son is not the creator of the universe in the sense in which Paramātman is.

Again, the Brahman of the Gauḍīyas and the Holy Ghost of the Christians are so different conceptions that they render no scope for comparison in any way. While Brahman is the substance of existence, consciousness and bliss with all Its powers completely dormant, the Holy Ghost is the Gift of God as the person of Love with His power of procession. Rather the conception of the Holy Ghost bears a little similarity with the conception of 'bhakti' or prīti which proceeds from Bhagavat as His hladinī through saints and preceptors to the heart of the devotees.

Again, while the Christian devotee has to meditate and realise the Trinity - the three persons in God for his complete realisation, the devotee, according to Śrī Jīva, has only to meditate and realise the supreme person Bhagavat for his complete realisation by transcending the worship of Brahman and Paramātman.

In Christian conception the three persons are almost equal. Though the Father is called the principle being the origin, the Son is nonetheless (15). But Paramātman and Brahman of the Gauḍīyas are definitely held to be inferior gradually to Bhagavat. Thus, we find that the three persons or the Trinity of the Christians bear no significant similarity to the three aspects or persons of Bhagavat, Paramātman and Brahman.

But, though there is no significant similarity in the conception of the three persons, there is indeed some similarity in the conception of the substance or essence as we have already stated. The most significant similarity between the two systems is their theistic outlook with a God with supreme powers and attributes, and with devotion as the means of the highest attainment.