

Gábor Barna, "Oh boldogságos Háromság" Tanulmányok a Szentháromság tiszteletéről "Oh, Blessed Trinity: Studies on the Veneration of the Holy Trinity (Paulus Hungarus-Kairosz Kiadó, 2003) .

The twelfth volume of the *Bibliotheca Religionis Popularis Szegediensis* addresses the veneration of the Holy Trinity, its historical/cultural representations, and its role and place in popular religion.

"...the volume is a well-edited, accomplished work filling up a great gap in Hungarian cultural history."

If we look at the concept of trinity we find that it is not the invention of Christianity and that this concept does not belong to Christianity alone. Moreover, its usage is not only limited to religion as such. For instance, the number three has been present in our everyday life since the origins of "religiosity" as the first perfect number embracing the beginning, the middle and the end. Furthermore, the trinity is present in almost every nations' folklore of the earth. It appears in the shamanic conception of the universe and in the mythological trinity of gods, too. However, this book does not deal with these themes for several reasons. First of all, the topic is so extensive that it would be difficult to cover it in a single volume. Secondly, we must point out that the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Szeged mainly focuses on the research of folk religion in the Carpathian Basin. This volume has a culturalhistorical, arthistorical and folkloristic approach. The central question is how people lived and live this mystery of faith in their everyday private devotion or during the celebration of feasts and how they articulate all these feelings in art, poetry and music. The volume also addresses the question of how the different historical stages of the devotion and cult of the Holy Trinity became a part of our religiosity and culture. The essays do not consider the theological nature of Holy Trinity such as the history of the Holy Trinity dogma or its role in church history, or the antitrinitarian heresy and the doctrines against it.

This book of essays is (somewhat ironically) divided into three thematic chapters. The first and the longest one deals with historical and iconographic questions, the second describes certain forms of the Holy Trinity cult and the third chapter is about texts and verbal symbols.

Zsolt Béla Szakács argues that Hungarian art history has a huge backlog in connection with the representations of the Holy Trinity. The first and so far the last summary of the medieval and baroque relics was published in 1977 by Sándor Bálint, the great folklorist and cultural historian of Szeged in his work *Ünnepi Kalendárium* (Calendar of Feasts). Therefore, Szakács's study is the first attempt after decades to collect and systematise critically all the representations of the Holy Trinity from medieval Hungary. Zoltán Szilárdfy summarizes the cult of Holy Trinity in the Baroque era. As we all know, the origins of the Baroque style are closely related to counterreformation and the Council of Trent. Thus, it is not surprising that we find the representations of Holy Trinity in almost every Baroque church in the Carpathian Basin. Several variations of the antique and medieval Holy Trinity-types appear from the ceilings to altarpieces in painting, sculpture and goldsmith's art especially in the Transdanubian region where Márton Padányi Bíró, the bishop of Veszprém (1745-1762) considered the cult of the Holy Trinity and its propagation as his most personal concern. The bishop ordered the praying of angelic rosary on New Year's Day, which is still an existing tradition in Székesfehérvár. We can clearly see from this essay

how a clergyman can have a great effect on popular religion. Mária L. Imre and Gábor Limbacher examine the local outdoor/open-air representations of the Holy Trinity. In spite of the fact that these were made under the influence of church authority, they became part of popular religion. For example, people make the sign of the cross or take off their hats passing these relics.

As we can see from the essays mentioned above, besides the official veneration of the Holy Trinity there were/are on-going popular veneration as well. People not only accepted the dogma of Holy Trinity, but it also became part of their popular devotion. This devotion strengthened during the plague against which votive churches devoted to the Holy Trinity; chapels, altars and monstrances were erected. László Józsa's manuscript gives a summary of such relics in Kunszentmárton. Erika Vass and Irén Szabó essays discuss several present-day religious customs.

In conclusion, the volume is a well-edited, accomplished work filling up a great gap in Hungarian cultural history. The book also provides a fine collection of visual and textual sources following each essay.

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 [Contents](#) | [Main Page](#) 