

ARTICLE 2

We believe in one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

At the very center of the Christian message stands a profound mystery: that the one God exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For a long time the church has used the expression “three persons in one Godhead.” The idea that God exists in three persons is known as the doctrine of the Trinity. The blessed Trinity is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. “So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three gods but one God” (*Athanasian Creed*).

The doctrine of the Trinity stresses the perfect fellowship and relationship within the triune God. The three persons of the Godhead enjoy the closest ties of love and common purpose. A vivid example of these personal relationships within the Trinity are the events that occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Every spiritual manifestation seen and heard on the Day of Pentecost flowed from the victorious Christ. On that day, Jesus gave to the disciples the promised Holy Spirit, who had been first received by Christ from the Father (Acts 2:33). Christ continues to give the Holy Spirit to His followers today.

1. The One God

a. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the one God.

Although each of the three persons of the Holy Community has His own distinct identity, all work together harmoniously as one God to accomplish the plan of salvation. Scripture emphasizes the mutual relationship and communion of the three persons of the one Godhead (2 Corinthians 5:19; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Romans 5:5)

Scripture references: 2 Corinthians 5:19; Galatians 1:3-4; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Romans 5:5

b. The Bible affirms that God is one.

(1) In the Old Testament the confession of faith is “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!”

This confession strongly expresses the unity of God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Old Testament teaches that there is a God and this God is one. So whatever we say about God's existing in three persons, the unity of God must also be emphasized. His unity is basic and the starting point of our faith.

(2) The Bible's proclamation that there is no God but Jehovah, distinguishes the one true God from the many gods worshiped in the pagan religions during biblical times.

The unity of God could very well summarize the message of the prophets (Deuteronomy 4:35; 2 Kings 19:15; Jeremiah 2:11). The prophet Isaiah vigorously declared, speaking for God, “I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 42:8).

Scripture references: Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; 2 Kings 19:15; Jeremiah 2:11; Isaiah 42:8; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6.

2. The One God in Three Persons

The Bible repeatedly tells us that there is only one God. But as the Scripture unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that God exists in three persons. In the New Testament, these three persons are identified as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

a. Old Testament writings serve as witnesses to the existence and the unity of the Holy Trinity.

God and "Spirit"—The prophet Isaiah implied that God is more than one person. He said, "And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me" (Isaiah 48:16). The same prophet said that Israel "rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit" (63:10). And there are other such references to the Spirit of God as One by whom God spoke and acted in the world (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 7:12).

"Us"—There are also such expressions as "Who will go for Us?" (Isaiah 6:8) and "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

"Elohim"—That God is more than one person is also implied by the divine name "Elohim." "In the beginning God [Hebrew: *Elohim*] created..." (Genesis 1:1). "Elohim" is plural. Though it does not specifically describe God as Trinity, the plurality and unity of God are suggested by the name Elohim.

"Holy, Holy, Holy"—In Isaiah's vision of the Lord, the threefold utterance of the seraphim, "holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3) may be taken as pointing to the three persons of the Godhead.

Scripture references: Isaiah 6:3, 8; 48:16; 63:10; Genesis 1:2, 26; Job 33:4; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 7:12

b. New Testament writings serve as witnesses to the existence of three persons who each have distinct roles and work in unity as one God.

The main emphasis of the Old Testament is the unity of God, but the New Testament places more emphasis on the overwhelming evidence that God exists in three individual persons working together.

(1) Each member of the Trinity has a specific role.

There is not just one but three persons in the Godhead. Each person has His own identity.

Father—There is the Father who is the Creator and source of all things.

Son—There is the Son who redeems us.

Holy Spirit—There is the Holy Spirit who regenerates, cleanses, and fills us with His power.

(2) God is a unified being; therefore, the Trinity operates in unity.

As believers, we have fellowship with the blessed Trinity, and our lives are enriched by the worship of the triune God. The unity and life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the very basis of our lives and fellowship with one another. As Christians, we accept God's love, and

He accepts us into the profound fellowship of the triune God. Our Father's love is expressed to us through Christ and is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

Examples from the New Testament of the Holy Trinity's Unified Work:

The Baptism of Jesus—All three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in relation to the baptism of Jesus. On the occasion of Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, the Son, and the Father spoke His approval of the Son (Matthew 3:16-17). Today those who become disciples of Jesus are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; see also 2 Corinthians 13:14).

The Coming of the Holy Spirit—The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost pointed clearly to the Trinity (Acts 2:1-33). The fullness of the Spirit was the "promise of the Father" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33). The Father gave this promised Spirit to the exalted Christ, who in turn gave the Spirit to His followers. On the Day of Pentecost the spiritual manifestations were the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowered Jesus' followers to speak in other languages, filled them with His presence, and declared the great works of God through them (2:3-4, 11, 17-18).

The Stoning of Stephen—Another example of the Trinity is seen in the experience of Stephen. Before a mob stoned him, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked into heaven and saw the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father (Acts 7:55).

Many other passages in the New Testament speak of the three persons of the Godhead, revealing to us that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Among these are Romans 15:16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; and Ephesians chapter 2. God is one but at the same time triune.

Scripture references: Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Acts 2:1-33; 7:55; Romans 5:5; 15:16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Ephesians 2:18

Discussion

The One God

- 1) What is your understanding of the unity of God?
- 2) Discuss the difference between the one God Jehovah in three persons and the many gods worshiped in the pagan religions.

The One God in Three Persons

- 3) What are some examples from Old Testament writings that support the existence and the unity of the Holy Trinity?
- 4) What is a specific role of each member of the Trinity?
- 5) What are some examples from New Testament writings that support the existence of three persons with distinct roles, working in unity as one God?

Prayer

Blessed Trinity, we approach You in adoration and worship. You are the ever loving and everlasting God.

Because of our finite minds, we cannot comprehend the magnitude of Your greatness—how that You can be the one true God existing from all eternity in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Your Son, Jesus Christ, You have revealed Yourself as Father, and the Holy Spirit affirms to our hearts that we are Your children.

Help us—

- to confess our faith in You, our Father, by living as Your children;
- to confess our faith in Christ by following in His steps; and
- to confess our faith in the Holy Spirit by serving in His power.

In this humble prayer we acknowledge the glory of the Triune God—all three persons equally divine.

Amen.

Resources for Additional Study

Arrington, French L. *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Vol. 1. Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway, 1992; pp. 127-41.

Erickson, Millard J. *Making Sense of the Trinity: 3 Crucial Questions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

Toon, Peter. *Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996.

Torrance, Thomas Forsyth. *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.