

In the Trinity, the unity of God is located in the dynamic unity of three divine Persons who share one divine essence and life. God's essence or substance simply means God's ultimate nature (the nature of anything is what it is). God's essence is what He is! God's nature has many aspects, some of which He has been pleased to reveal; and we call these aspects perfections, qualities, characteristics, or attributes. We attribute or ascribe them to God because He attributes them to Himself. God's essence or nature, although characterized by various attributes, is simple and indivisible. There is only one essence that is fully God; there are three Persons who share fully in that essence.

E. The meaning of the plurality of God

Scripture teaches that as the Father is God, so Jesus Christ is God, and so the Holy Spirit is God. In I Peter 1:2 we read of "the foreknowledge of God the Father." In John 1:1 we read that the Word that became flesh "was God." And in Acts 5:3-4 Peter tells Ananias that in lying to the Holy Spirit he has "not lied to men, but to God."

In addition, we have already referred to instances of interaction between the Father and the Son in Jesus' public baptism, His transfiguration, and His high priestly prayer. To these we may add Galatians 4:4, where Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son," and John 14:26, where Christ says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

Because of the history of the doctrine we have become accustomed to calling the Father, the Son, and the Spirit Persons. This term has been widely accepted from the time of the church fathers to the present. The Greek fathers used the words PROSOPON and HUPOSTASIS, both of which they understood (in this context) to mean "person." The Latin fathers used the words persona and subsistentia. Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas, and Calvin all employ this language. In fact Calvin, in Book 1, Chapter 13, sections 2-6 of his Institutes, presents a strong