

HOW CAN THREE BE ONE?

Many times, non-Christians ask: **how can Three be One?**

THE BELIEF IN ONE GOD!

The Holy Bible, in both Testaments, assures us in many occasions of the Oneness of God. When our Lord Jesus Christ was asked: “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus answered, “The first of all the commandments is ‘Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One,’” (Mk12:29).

While we affirm the Oneness of God, we reject polytheism (i.e. multiplicity of divine beings) and the worship of idols. We refuse the teachings of Atheism or even the assumption of Agnosticism.

THE UNIQUE ONENESS OF GOD

God is unique in everything. Even though the Holy Bible calls Him the “One God.” however, this does not mean that He is subject to mathematical laws, because He is Infinite. God is One but surely He is greater than the number one. He is greater than all things in heaven or on earth.

In other words, we have to redefine and comprehend the use of the term “One” not to mean a number among many. It defines a unique, single, unutterable identity of God. God cannot be made subject to our numbering system; instead He is above all human systems. St. Clement of Alexandria said, “**God is the One surpassing all oneness, and above unity itself.**”

The Oneness of God is not a single selfish isolated entity. It is the Oneness of substantial unity that is remote from isolation.

HOW CAN THREE BE ONE?

Belief in the Son and the Holy Spirit is not indicative of polytheism, nor is it an attempt at extending the Father’s substance. The Son said, “I am in the Father and the Father in Me,” (Jn 14:10). “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” (Jn 14:9). **Each Person (Hypostasis) in the Holy Trinity fills the other two and is contained in them, but is still somehow distinguishable from the Others.** Just as we can differentiate the human mind from the human soul although it is not an addition to it nor can it be separated from it.

Unity here does not imply adding. **Our faith in the Holy Trinity does not contradict the Oneness of God.** We do not believe in three divine essences (ousia) but in a single Divine essence. To understand this Divine mystery, we can say that the Divine essence has been in existence since eternity. This eternal existence is a rational existence as well; in other words, it has Mind, Wisdom or Logos (Word) born of His own existence. So the Mind of the Divine nature does not have an essence other than that of the Father but it is born out of the same essence of God. So when we call the Divine Being “Father” and the Logos “Son.” we are affirming that the Son is the Word of God. This does not mean that the Father and the Son are two essences or we then would believe in two gods.

Athenagoras said that the Eternal God has the Logikos (Mind) eternally existed in Him. The Divine Being (the Father) is eternally alive. His life proceeds from Him and is not external to His being. Existence is distinguishable from life but neither is separate from the other and neither has a separate Divine essence because life belongs to this Divine Existence Himself.

- **It is essential to believe in the Living Rational Being, of a simple, single, eternal essence.**

The three Persons are eternally inseparable and none of them ever existed without the others. They are like fire that has a flame and emits light and heat at the same time. Thus we understand that the Oneness of God is not partitionable into a trinity, instead all three Persons of the Trinity unite without a loss in Each's identity.

St. Dionysus of Alexandria

THE HOLY TRINITY AND THEIR TYPES

Belief in the Holy Trinity is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. It is a hidden, incomprehensible mystery that touches our lives here on earth as well as in the heavens. The Church Fathers put forth much effort in trying to explain this mystery. Human language falls short of expressing the Divine, and **the entirety of nature lacks a true example of the existence of a single essence in three distinguishable persons.**

To perceive this mystery we may say that God is the only Being whose Self-existence is a necessity. This Self-existence is what we call the Divine essence, which has two groups of attributes and precepts. Certain attributes are personal and concern God's own Being. Other attributes concern His relationship to the creation. The three personal attributes are: Being, Reason (Logos) and Life. These attributes are not an addition to God's essence as if they were originated from outside of Him; instead they are from eternity inseparable from His divine essence Itself. There was no time in which the Divine Substance existed without Reason or without Life. **The Father is the Cause, the Son is the same essence (being the Logos or the Word) attribute and the Holy Spirit is Life.**

It is worthy to note that the three Persons (*hypostasis*) are not separated, but have the same essence and their work is inseparable.

EXAMPLES FROM CREATION

First of all, any of the following examples can at best partially explain the mystery and help shed some light unto it. It has to be understood that any of these examples explain only one aspect or another of the mystery.

Secondly, to understand this mystery we need Divine grace that gives us communion with God i.e. communion with the Father in His Son through the Holy Spirit.

1. **The creation of man** is in the image of God (Gn 1:27; 5:2) whose soul exists, rational and alive. While being a single human, its existence is different from its reason and its life. The three are inseparable from each other.

2. God promised to protect His church saying: "For I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst" (Zec 2:5). Fire has three self attributes similar to the Persons of the Trinity: **flame, light born out of the flame and heat proceeding from the flame.** But we have to notice that these are not persons in themselves since none of them fills the other two. Through light, we can understand light and through heat, we can understand heat.

3. **The sun** is a planet that emanates rays of light and heat while being a single sun. We call the planet itself "the sun" and we call its rays of light "the sun" and similarly we call its heat "the sun."

4. God is likened to **an apple**. It was said: "Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my Beloved among the sons" (Songs 2:3). The apple has the substance that we eat, its taste and the aroma we smell. The apple can be recognized through its taste or its smell.



- **Is there a need to believe in the Holy Trinity?**
- **If we believe in one God, do we have to believe in the Holy Trinity?**
- **Does belief in the Holy Trinity contradict our belief one God?**

Before we answer these questions we must respond to the question:

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DOES GOD HAVE A SON?

It is inappropriate to view God materialistically. His is not a human or any other sort of created being. The expression of the Father and the Son does not mean that God got married and gave birth to another god. God is without gender. **The Father gives birth to the Son as the sun gives birth to its rays or as reason is born of the human soul, and brightness from light.** The Son proceeds as light out of light, when you light a candle from a candle you say that this light is a son of that one, although both are one light!

This concept can be clarified through references found in the Holy Bible.

1. The Holy Bible refers to the Son as “the Word” or “the Logos.” This means “Uttered Mind” or “Logical Utterance.” He is also called God’s Wisdom. There is no differentiation between the two words, “the Son” and the “Uttered Mind.” The Holy Bible by calling Him the Son assured us that the Son was born of the Father. To assure us of Their unity, He was also called the “Logos.” In a like manner, we do not refer to a person as two beings imply because he/she possesses a soul capable of internal words.

We must examine His sonship from a spiritual perspective. St. Athanasius said: “We repeat again that it is necessary not to compare the Divine birth with that of humans. We cannot think of the Son as a part of God. Also, the Divine birth does not include any emotions whatsoever, for God is not human. Humans give birth to what is changeable, but for God it is not so. God is not made up of parts and does not change; the Son does not cause Him to separate in parts nor change.

This is clearly documented in the Holy Bible. The Word of God is the Son, and the Son is the Word of God and His Wisdom. The Word or the Wisdom is not created and He is not a part of God. He is not a generation that can generate. In the Holy Bible, both expressions exist. It speaks of the “Son” to acknowledge the true natural birth of His nature so at the same time, we do not confuse this birth with that of humans. He is also called “the Word,” “the Wisdom” and “the Brightness” to teach us that His birth does not change. It is eternal and worthy of God.

2. Why is He called “the Son”? The relation between God and the Logos is certainly beyond our limited comprehension. The expression “the Son” or the “Only-Begotten Son” is used so that we might begin to understand it on our own terms. He originates from God the Father and is one with Him in nature. So that we, when united to Him, enjoy the Sonship through grace as a free divine gift.

We value this title because in it we find the abundance of gifts that God has granted us. Through the Holy Spirit we are united with the Son and thus we become sons of God.

3. It is said of God that He is seated on a throne and that He talks, hears, and sees, although God does not have a body to sit, or ears to hear, nor eyes to see. God possesses these capabilities in a very different way than we do. Therefore, is it not more than likely that His Son is very different than our human conception of a son.

God Himself declared, “This is My beloved Son,” (Mt 3:17) and when the chief priest asked Him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus answered, “I am,” (Mk 14:61,62). The angel who announced His incarnation said of Him, “Son of the Highest,” (Lk 1:32).

Only he and no other can say, “No one comes to the Father except through Me,” (Jn

14:6); “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” (Jn 14:9).

St. Paul the Apostle made a clear distinction between Him and all the prophets when he said: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.” (He 1:1).

4. The eternal birth of the Son reveals the loving nature of God because of his infinite love, He begot the Son and shared with Him the same divine nature, being one with Him. It is an incomparable love, for the Absolute Being gives Himself and His nature. This love was revealed to us in a way in which we could comprehend it.

This unique birth eliminates the idea of God being far removed from creation, for He is able to give. Every active substance/being must produce something. Fire gives birth to light and heat. The radioactive component of elements produces atomic power. The same can be said of the human mind, which gives birth to thoughts and ideas. **It is not possible then that God be described as an unproductive being. Since eternity, He has brought forth His Word, light of light, a brightness of His glory, that is why St. Paul the Apostle says of Him that He is “the brightness of His glory,” (Heb 1:3).** It is impossible to imagine a light without brightness. Truly the light that does not give light is darkness.

There has been no time when the Father existed without the Son. We cannot accept the idea that God is unable to give. As the sun cannot exist without its rays and its heat, the Father was never alone without the Son and the Holy Spirit generating from Him.

- **It is written that Jesus Christ is “the Brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...” (Heb 1:3) “He is the image of the invisible God,” (Col 1:15), just as the spoken word is the image of the invisible mind. But the brightness of the light is eternal, and the Son Himself is certainly eternal. As the light was always there, it is clear that the brightness has always been there with it. The existence of the brightness denotes the existence of the light and so there is no light that would not give light. The brightness shines before Him from eternity and born of Him always, shining in His presence. It is said “I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him” (Pro 8:30). So the Father, as well as the Son, is eternal because He is the Light of light.**

St. Dionysios of Alexandria

- **If the nature of God was not fruitful in Itself or if it is barren –as some claim- He would be like a light that does not light or as a dry stream, aren’t they ashamed when they talk about His power, His creation potential and then deny what is He in nature?**

Pope Athanasius the Apostolic

- **What do we think in light other than God the Father? Hasn’t His brightness (Heb. 1:3) existed with Him? It is impossible to think of a light without brightness, and if this is true then there was no time when the Son was not a Son.**

Origen

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A youth once asked me: How can I answer those who ask:

- **Does God have a Son?**
- **Does God have a wife of whom He gave birth a Son?**
- **Does this mean that there is more than one God?**

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HOW CAN GOD BECOME A MAN?

I met a young army officer once and he asked me:

- **What do you think of Jesus? Is He God?**
- **How can God the Absolute Being eat, drink, get thirsty, feel hungry, sleep, be in pain, be crucified and die?**

In brief I told him:

“When you enter the army camp, the whistle is blown and all the soldiers and the officers of lower rank stand at attention to greet you. What would happen if one of the soldiers refused to stand in order to greet you properly?

He answered: “He would be sent to a military prison.”

As the conversation went on I said: “Do you expect your wife and your child to stand by and greet you whenever you come home? Or does your child kiss you and throw himself into your arms? He may even put his tiny hand in your pocket hoping that there is a little surprise for him. This of course would be absurd behavior if it came from an officer or a soldier.

You treat God as if He is in an army camp, but we treat Him as if we’re in His home. He came to us and in His love shared everything except sin. He spoke our language as one of us. This is one example of real practical love. What you find impossible, we find a sweet factual issue.

Through love God gives us the impossible. Which is more logical to humans: the Absolute isolated God in heavens giving orders and prohibiting things from happening, or God that came down to us and in His love embraced us and carried us to His heavens? Is it God Who is eternally far away from man or God Who through love dwells with us and in us?

WHY DO SOME REFUSE TO BELIEVE IN THE DIVINE INCARNATION?

1. Man’s inability to comprehend his own value in the eyes of God and His desire to take man up to the heavens to share in His eternal glory.
2. The misconception of the human body and human actions as things that God hates and despises.
3. Some think that incarnation limits the Divinity of God. This is incorrect. For example, man himself, although he is limited by his physical body, his soul is not limited in the same way. The television and radio are also examples. Although again, both are physically limited to the space that they occupy, the rays they emit travel thousands of miles across the globe. So can the body that God made limit His Divinity?
4. The sun’s rays enter our homes and shine on our streets, even on the piles of garbage. The rays purify everything they reach, yet they remain undefiled. If it enters a dark place, it does not take from the darkness but fills the place with light. Likewise, God shined on us with His love to provide light in our darkness. As the prophet Malachi said “but to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” (Malachi 4:2).

WHY DID GOD BECOME A MAN?

1. The need for a divine Teacher:

Sin defiled the vision of humanity. We became unable to see God, but as an isolated being in His

heaven, far removed from our earthly bodies that were corrupted by sin. We see ourselves as going in one of two ways: sometimes we think we are gods ourselves with no need for salvation, grace, or help and other times we see ourselves as worthless beings with no power and with no goals. With the divine incarnation, the Heavenly Teacher descended to open our eyes to see God as the God who loves us and is diligently searching for us. Only then did we come to the realization of what God has prepared for us in heaven.

2. He got closer to you so you would get closer to Him.

As a result of His love, He took the initiative by coming to our world. And now He is as a Father waiting for you to get closer to Him through the work of His Spirit in you. Draw near to Him in repentance, for He loves the sinners and the tax collectors. He forgives all of our sins, so that our souls may be saved from damnation. He desires to run to you and fall on your neck and kiss you. (Lk 15:20). You cannot know Him through books alone but must meet Him through His work of salvation. Watch Him bending down asking to wash your feet so you may share with Him in Paradise and enjoy His presence.

3. The need for a Divine Savior

The prophet Moses, fifteen centuries before Christ, wrote the story of the fall of the first man and the divine promise that followed, in which the woman's seed would bruise the old serpent's (Satan's) head, as mentioned in Genesis 3:15. Across many generations, prophecies were declared concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. The Old Testament, which is also the Holy Book of the Jewish people, contains many prophecies that were only fulfilled by one man, Jesus. These prophecies, written by many different prophets across a span of thousands of years, contain a detailed description of the Messiah, His nature, His message, His works and the manner of His death and His resurrection. No other figure in all of history has fulfilled all that was written of the Messiah but Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. He is the Divine Savior that people had long been waiting for. As Isaiah the prophet says: "When You make His soul an offering for sin... He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." (Is 53: 10,12)

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHETS

The testimony of **David the Prophet**: (1010 B.C) "He bowed the heavens also, and came down." (Ps 18:9).

The testimony of **Isaiah the Prophet**: (730 years B.C) "Oh, that You would rend the heavens that you would come down!" (Is 64:1)

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel (God with us)" (Is 7:14).

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Might God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace... the Zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Is 9:6,7)

Testimony of **Micah the prophet**: (710 B.C) "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathath, out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

- **My soul longs for you My God.
You bowed down the heaven and came to me. Through love You became Man..
You honored humanity when You dwelled in its midst.
You even honored even my body when you took a human body.
I am not embarrassed anymore of doing any daily works because You worked as a man.
I treasure You who did not despise sharing my nature so that I may share Your glory.**
- **You are the Greatest Master
You fixed Your image in me so that I may become a living icon of You.**
- **You are my heavenly Teacher.
Open my sight so that I may see You inside me and see the gates of heaven open before me.**
- **You are my Good Savior**

With You I set out to the heavenly glory.



The need for the Master of Creation

Man is the most glorified of God's creation on earth. God made him in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26,27). He made him a king with authority; he gave him tremendous power of mind, a free will, and an eternal soul. He provided him with the ability to reach space and land on the moon. He made him a place in the heavens to reside with the heavenly forever. But when this image was corrupted by sin, it was God, the Master of creation, who came to humanity to uncorrupt the corrupted. He came to His most beloved creation in order to bring it back to its original state.

But an important question remains:

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Can God Die?

Warmly, the king said to his Christian vasier (prime minister): “ I love you, I trust you, and I feel satisfied with your advice and wisdom, but the one thing that astonishes me is that you believe that God became a man and that He died for the human race? Isn’t that foolish and ignorant?”

The vasier spoke to the king about God’s tremendous love and appreciation for man, His longing for man’s salvation, and His desire to grant man eternal glory. However, the king could not accept these ideas.

The next day, the king and his vasier were walking in the palace garden. The nanny was walking along side them, holding the baby prince. The vasier snatched the baby away from the nanny and threw him into the deep stream. Without a second thought, the king ran to the stream and was about to dive into the water to save his child. But the vasier stopped him saying, “It is not your child, it is just a doll.”

Then he said to the king “Your majesty, you disregarded your position as a king, wearing the royal crown and the royal gown, and were about to jump into the stream to save your beloved son. Is it possible that you are more loving than God? Why wouldn’t God come to the stream of the world, carry us from its waves to save us?”

The king began to realize that God was not the absolute idea of an all-powerful being, but He is also love itself. How then could He not show His love to His children? **After seeing the state of need that His children were in, how could He refuse to descend to their world to die for them?** Only then could He raise them to His divine embrace once again.

THROUGH DEATH HE DESTROYED DEATH!

St. Ephrem the Syrian likens Satan to a wolf devouring humans one by one until all of humanity loses life by becoming prisoner in his belly. When Satan saw our Lord Jesus Christ as a man, he thought that He was like all other men, so he devoured Him by death. But his belly could not hold Christ the Giver of resurrection and life. Christ destroyed the gates of death and rescued those who believed in Him from eternal death. That is why the Church sings “**by death He trampled over death, and those who were in the graves He granted them eternal life.**”

WHY WOULD SOME REJECT THE DEATH OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS?

1. Some think that Christians believe in the death of the Divinity. Certainly not! **The incarnate God does not die in divinity but only in the flesh He took.** Death is occurred when the soul departs from the body. The body dies but the soul lives on.
2. Some think that Christ’s death on the Cross is weakness. What is not recognized is that He voluntarily died out of His own free will, as He says, “**I lay down My life for the sheep. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again**” (Jn 10:15,18).
3. Our experience with death is sorrowful and it is often times related to sin and bodily weakness. **But Christ transformed death from being the fruit of sin to being an exceptional work of love.** Through love, He died to break the chains of Hades and to

set us free to ascend to Paradise. His death is our joyful subject. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.” (Heb. 12:2.)

4. The secret of Divine love must be shared. To heal our wounds, God does not use orders to abolish death and forgive humans; He uses His incredible love. He came to share our lives and even our death. He entered the grave to carry us to eternal life.

WHY IS HIS DEATH A NECESSITY?

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ as pertaining to His birth and His death is like the two facets of our human life, the beginning and the end. This was necessary so that all aspects of His life could be applicable to our lives. St. Irenaeus says: “It was necessary for the power that changes our nature to reach both sides. It was necessary that it touches the start and reaches till the end so that all that’s in between is covered.”

- **Death despised our Lord (the Incarnate God), the Lord in turn despised death making His way to victory.
He submitted Himself to death willingly, in order to destroy the power of death.
He carried the cross and submitted to death on it. The moment before He died, He called out and brought death out from Hades! At this instance, death was conquered.
The divinity hid in the humanity to fight death! So death killed... but then it was killed!
Death slaughtered natural life, but supernatural life slaughtered it.**

St. Ephrem the Syrian

- **As a courageous Shepherd, He took captive the lion that frightened the flock and destroyed the sheepfold. He broke his teeth, took out his claws, shaved his hair, and left him as a toy for kids to play with. It was in this manner that Christ was victorious over death - a source of fear for humanity. He robbed death of its terrifying property.**

St. John Chrysostom

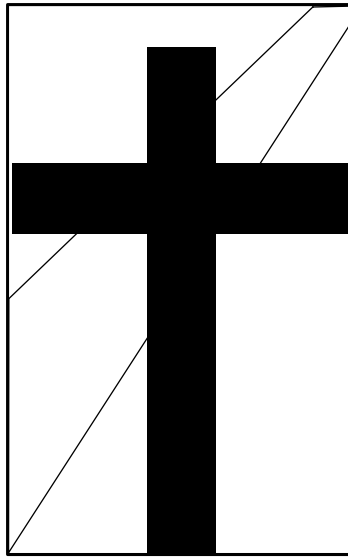
EXTRACTED SWEETNESS OUT OF THE BITTER

- **He went into the grave as a simple man and came out with the glory of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As it is written ‘out of the bitter came something sweet’.
Death is bitter and Jesus is sweet to those who taste Him. So He became a food for all people.**

St. Jacob of Sarug

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- **“With Your love, You came to my world, entered my grave with me, so I too wish to carry Your death in my body.” (2 Cor. 4:10).**
- **You shared with me the death of the body to take away the death of the soul and granted me the glorious eternal life.**
- **I feared death and its curse but now I desire it for it is a blessing.
It is a path to You, my heart’s desire.**



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