

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God is one in **substance** (or essence) but three in **persons**—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The concept of **substance** (Latin: *substantia*; Greek: *ousia*) is essential to Trinitarian theology because it distinguishes God's unity from the three distinct persons.

### **Aristotelian Definition**

- Aristotle defines substance (*ousia*) as **"that which exists in itself and not in another."**

### **Cartesian Definition (René Descartes)**

- Descartes defines substance as **"a thing that exists independently of anything else except God."**

## **1. Definition of Substance in the Trinity**

The **Nicene Creed (325 AD)** affirmed that the Father and the Son are **"of the same substance"** (*homoousios* in Greek), meaning they share the same divine essence. This was later reaffirmed in the **Athanasian Creed**, which states:

*"The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; yet there are not three Gods, but one God."*

This means that while the three persons of the Trinity are distinct in relationship, they are **not separate beings**; rather, they share the **one divine substance**.

Classical theological definitions of **substance** often draw from **Greek philosophy (especially Aristotle and Neoplatonism)** and are integrated into **Christian thought** to explain theological concepts such as God, and the Trinity. Here are some key theological perspectives on substance:

### **1. Patristic and Early Christian Theology**

- The early Church Fathers (such as Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers) adopted **Aristotle's** and **Platonic** understandings of substance to articulate Christian doctrines.
- 
- **Example:** In Trinitarian theology, substance (*ousia*) is used to describe the divine essence that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share.

### **Nicene and Trinitarian Theology (4th Century AD)**

- **St. Athanasius & the Cappadocian Fathers:** Clarified that **substance (ousia)** refers to the shared divine essence, while **hypostasis** refers to the distinct persons of the Trinity.
- **Example Definition:** "The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of one **substance (homoousios)** but distinct in personhood."

## 2. Biblical Support for God's One Substance

### a) One God in Essence

- **Deuteronomy 6:4** – *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."*
  - This verse emphasizes the unity (*echad*) of God, meaning He is singular in essence.
- **Isaiah 44:6** – *"I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god."*
  - God alone is truly divine, affirming a single divine substance.

### b) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Are Equally God

- **John 10:30** – *"I and the Father are one."*
  - Jesus claims unity with the Father, not just in purpose but in divine essence (*homoousios*).
- **John 14:9** – *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."*
  - Jesus reveals the Father's divine nature because they share the same substance.
- **Colossians 2:9** – *"For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."*
  - Jesus is fully divine, possessing the complete divine essence.
- **Acts 5:3-4** – Peter tells Ananias that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God, indicating that the Spirit shares the same divine essence.

## 3. Early Church Fathers on the Trinity's Substance

- **Athanasius (c. 296–373 AD):**

*"For the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, as the radiance stands to the light." (Against the Arians, 3.25)*

- This analogy shows that the Father and the Son are inseparably one in substance.
- **Augustine (354–430 AD):**

*"The Trinity is one God, not three Gods; for the substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one." (On the Trinity, Book 7)*

## Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God is one in substance but three in persons. This is rooted in Scripture and affirmed by the early Church. While the persons are distinct in their relationships (Father, Son, and Spirit), they are not separate beings, but **one God in essence** (*homoousios*).

## The Deity in the Doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that **God is one in essence (substance) but exists eternally as three distinct persons**: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully and equally God, meaning that the **deity** (or divine nature) is fully possessed by all three persons.

---

## 1. Definition of Deity in the Trinity

The word "**deity**" refers to the divine nature or godhood. In Trinitarian theology, all three persons of the Trinity share the same **deity**—they are all fully God. The Nicene Creed (325 AD) affirms that the Son is "**God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God**", emphasizing that Jesus shares the **same divine essence** (*homoousios*) with the Father.

The **Athanasian Creed** also states:

*"The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; yet there are not three Gods, but one God."*

This means that deity is **not divided** among the three persons but is wholly and fully possessed by each.

---

## 2. Biblical Evidence for the Deity of Each Person

### a) The Father is God

- **John 6:27** – *"For on him God the Father has set his seal."*
- **1 Corinthians 8:6** – *"Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist."*

The Father's deity is universally accepted, as He is often referred to simply as "God" in Scripture.

### b) The Son (Jesus Christ) is God

- **John 1:1** – *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*
  - Jesus (the Word) is explicitly called God.
- **John 8:58** – *"Before Abraham was, I AM."*
  - Jesus claims the divine name *I AM* (from Exodus 3:14), equating Himself with Yahweh.
- **Colossians 2:9** – *"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."*
  - Jesus possesses **all** of the divine nature.

- **Hebrews 1:8** – *"But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.'"*
  - The Father calls the Son **God**.

### c) The Holy Spirit is God

- **Acts 5:3-4** – Peter tells Ananias that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God.
  - **1 Corinthians 3:16** – *"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"*
    - The Holy Spirit dwells in believers as God's presence.
  - **2 Corinthians 3:17** – *"Now the Lord is the Spirit."*
    - The Holy Spirit is referred to as **Lord**, a divine title.
- 

## 3. The Unity of the Three Persons in One Deity

While the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons, they are **not separate gods** but one God in essence.

- **Deuteronomy 6:4** – *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."*
- **Matthew 28:19** – Jesus commands baptism *"in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"* showing their **equal divine authority**.
- **2 Corinthians 13:14** – *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

These passages confirm that all three persons share the **same divine nature** while remaining distinct.

---

## 4. The Early Church on the Deity of the Trinity

### Athanasius (4th Century) Against Arianism

*"We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance."*

### Augustine (5th Century)

*"Each [Person] is fully God, yet there are not three Gods, but one God."*

---

## 5. Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that the **deity** of God is shared fully by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is **equally and fully God**, yet there is only **one God**. This mystery is revealed throughout Scripture and was confirmed by the early church. The divine essence is not **divided** among the three persons but is **fully possessed** by each.