

ARTICLE 1

God¹

We believe in the one, true, living God, Creator of heaven and earth.² God is almighty in power, perfect in wisdom, righteous in judgment, overflowing in steadfast love.³ God is the Sovereign who rules over all things visible and invisible, the Shepherd who rescues the lost and helpless.⁴ God is a refuge and fortress for those in need.⁵ God is a consuming fire, perfect in holiness, yet slow to anger and abounding in tender mercy.⁶ God comforts like a loving mother, trains and disciplines like a caring father, and persists in covenant love like a faithful husband.⁷ We confess God as eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁸

God the Father

God the Father is the source of all life. In Him we live and move and have our being.⁹ The Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, and hears the prayers of all who call on Him.¹⁰ In the fullness of time, the Father sent the Son for the salvation of the world. Through Jesus Christ, the Father adopts all who respond in faith to the gospel, forgiving those who repent of their sin and entering into a new covenant with them.¹¹ God gives the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, to all His children.¹² God's creative and redemptive love sustains this world until the end of the age.¹³

God the Son

The Son, through whom all things were created and who holds all things together, is the image of the invisible God. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, Jesus took on human nature to redeem this fallen world.¹⁴ He revealed the fullness of God through His obedient and sinless life.¹⁵ Through word and deed, Jesus proclaimed the reign of God, bringing good news to the poor, release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.¹⁶ Christ triumphed over sin through His death and resurrection, and was exalted as Lord of creation and the church.¹⁷ The Saviour of the world invites all to be reconciled to God, offering peace to those far and near, and calling them to follow Him in the way of the cross.¹⁸ Until the Lord Jesus returns in glory, He intercedes for believers, acts as their advocate, and calls them to be His witnesses.¹⁹

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, is the creative power, presence, and wisdom of God.²⁰ The Spirit convicts people of sin, gives them new life, and guides them into all truth.²¹ By the Spirit, believers are baptized into one body.²²

The indwelling Spirit testifies that they are God's children, distributes gifts for ministry, empowers for witness, and produces the fruit of righteousness.²³ As Comforter, the Holy Spirit helps God's children in their weakness, intercedes for them according to God's will, and assures them of eternal life.²⁴

Genesis 1; Exodus 15:2-3; 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Psalm 8; 23; 139; Isaiah 55:8-9; 66:12-13; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hosea 11:1-4; Matthew 1:18-25; 5-7; 28:18-20; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 4:18-19; John 1:1-18; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 13; 15:3-8; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:16-21; 13:14; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 1:15-2:22; 3:14-21; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:5-6, 9-10.

Preamble:

The National Faith & Life Team (NFLT) is tasked with the provision of resources related to the MB Confession of Faith. They have taken on the task of updating the existing resources (viz., Commentary, Pastoral Application) that have been in use for over twenty years. In 2020, the NFLT began the long-term project of rewriting and updating the resources for each of the 18 articles in the MB Confession of Faith. The new resources will include Explanatory Notes and FAQ responses for each article. Article 8 received these updated resources in 2021.

The procedures relating to the approval of updated resources includes a time when the resources will be posted on the CCMBC website inviting any feedback and/or questions prior to their final approval and publication. That is why the present document is being posted.

If you have feedback and/or questions related to these Article 1: Explanatory Notes, please send them to listeningwell@mbchurches.ca. Thank you for your participation in this project.

Ken Esau

CCMBC National Faith & Life Director

ARTICLE 1

God

EXPLANATORY NOTES: REVISED

¹ **A.W. Tozer is well known for saying: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” The MB Confession begins then with what is most important.** It does not start with human beings, salvation, revelation, or the Second Coming of Jesus but simply with “God.” **Article 1 presupposes that the God described in the Old and New Testaments is a true reflection of the actual God.** Even with this large collection of material, we must admit that all of our human language and all of our human reason is inadequate to fully describe God. Theologians use the word “ineffable” to describe how God is beyond everything our human language is capable of describing. Article 1 uses limited human language to try to capture the magnitude of God’s beauty, majesty, character, goodness, and self-giving love that should lead every human being to bow down in joyful worship.

Article 1 does not use philosophical and extra-biblical words like omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, immutability, impeccability, infinity, providence, or even Trinity but rather uses the language, metaphors, and descriptions of divine actions that come directly from Scripture. While there are three main sub-headings (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit), Article 1 is not a systematic theology presentation but more of a kaleidoscope through which many rich and colourful descriptors are placed side-by-side. It is also not an abstract list of attributes (perfection, unchangeableness) arrived at by somehow examining God under a giant microscope.

Instead God (Father, Son, and Spirit) is described by what the Triune God is personally doing and has done. It is clear that there is really no way of knowing God’s character and being apart from telling God’s story from original creation to future re-creation, from the Garden to the New Jerusalem. We could call this amazing work of redemption God’s Shalom Kingdom story, which incorporates the Old Testament vision of Shalom together with Jesus’ words about the coming of God’s Kingdom. We learn best who God is when we examine carefully this big story, and when we hear and respond to the invitation to join God and become part of his story. [[Return to article](#)]

² **It is appropriate to begin with this four-part affirmation about God because everything comes from this.**

- a) **God is One.** This central Old Testament claim about God comes from Deuteronomy 6:4 (what Jewish folks refer to as the *Shema*): “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (or “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone”).

This text fundamentally rules out the worship of anything (e.g., worthless idols) or anyone other than God (Exodus 20:2-6; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4; 26:1; 1 Samuel 12:21; 2 Kings 17:15; Psalms 78:58; 96:5; Isaiah 44:6-9; Jeremiah 10:8).

- b) **God is the one true God (2 Chronicles 15:3; Isaiah 65:16; Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 John 5:20). Article 1 affirms orthodox monotheism (although a full understanding of monotheism took centuries to develop among the Old Testament people of God). Only the biblical God revealed as the LORD (Yahweh) is God.** Yahweh is the personal name for the “one true God” (Exodus 3:13-15) and the only “living God” (Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; Psalm 42:2; Matthew 16:16; Acts 14:15). Scholars have a variety of meanings for the name Yahweh (or Jehovah in the KJV). It could be the third person singular form of “I AM WHO I AM,” or “I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE,” or even “I CAUSE/CREATE TO BE WHAT I CAUSE/CREATE TO BE.”
- In the ancient world, pagan gods were often considered to be in control of important areas of life like fertility, weather, or war, and these gods were given physical forms that fit that domain (e.g., bull, lion, human female, human male warrior, etc.).** In addition, their names were used in incantations and rituals in order for humans to control the gods for personal benefit.
- Yahweh’s name in itself is saying: “I am not like these other gods.”** Yahweh is not limited to any one area of the created order but his throne is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come” (Ephesians 1:21). No form or image is adequate to express Yahweh’s character and purposes (until of course, God becomes incarnated in Jesus [Colossians 1:15]). **Yahweh’s great name remains elusive and cannot be manipulated by humans for their benefit.**
- c) **God is the living God (Jeremiah 10:10; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26; 2 Kings 19:4; Matthew 16:16; Romans 9:26).** Yahweh is truly alive and active in the world. He is not asleep or absent. He is not an idol perched in a temple. Yahweh is able to live with and walk among his people who are called the “temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16).
- d) **God is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1-2; 14:19,22; Isaiah 40:28; 42:5; 45:18; Romans 1:25).** All heaven and earth owe God worship and service because God is the Creator (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 148). But it is also clear that God did not create humanity “as if he needed anything” since “he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25). [[Return to article](#)]

³ **While it is of great significance that the Triune God is the one, true, and living God who is Creator of all, this does not yet tell us much about the character of this God.** Will this God be capricious and selfish, imposing slavery upon

humanity for God's own benefit? We are now told that God is almighty in power (Exodus 15:2-3; Isaiah 6:3-5; 37:16; 44:16; 47:4) which explains how God is the powerful Creator, Redeemer, and King.

God is perfect in wisdom (Daniel 2:20; Job 12:13; Psalm 104:24; 139; Isaiah 28:29; 55:8-9; Jeremiah 10:12; Romans 11:33), righteous in judgment (Psalm 4:1; 7:11; Isaiah 5:16; Romans 2:5), and overflowing in steadfast (covenantal or *hesed*) love (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalms 136; Deuteronomy 7:9-12; 23:5; 2 Chronicles 6:14; Nehemiah 9:17). The New Testament word *agape* carries this meaning (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 John 4:8-10). Covenantal love involves kindness, affection, forgiveness, sacrifice, self-giving, and faithfulness. In reference to God, his unconditional, sacrificial, and tenacious love overflows beyond the obligations of relationship. As 1 John 3:1 says: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

The wonderful news is that God's almighty power is displayed (past, present, and future) in a way consistent with perfect wisdom, righteous judgment, and steadfast love. Worship of this God is to be a response not simply from obligation but from joyful volition because of God's beautiful character which will be actively lived out for the ultimate well-being of all creation. God's character is part of the good news! [\[Return to article\]](#)

⁴ Article 1 is describing a key element in the nature of God. God is not only a **transcendent ("way above us") Sovereign/King** ruling high above with power and authority (1 Samuel 12:12; Psalm 5:2; 44:4; 47:7; 57:5; 95:3; Isaiah 6:5; 37:16; 44:6; Jeremiah 10:10; 1 Timothy 6:15-16) but also is an **immanent ("close by us") Shepherd** (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11-16; Zechariah 9:16; John 10:11-14; Revelation 7:17).

The Old Testament combines the images of King and Shepherd first in reference to God (Genesis 49:24-25; Psalm 23:1; 28:9; 80:1). To "shepherd" Israel is king or leader language (Numbers 27:17; 2 Samuel 5:2; 7:7; 1 Kings 22:17). In terms of an Old Testament king, this language is combined most clearly in King David whose occupation as a shepherd of sheep was perfect preparation for his role of being a shepherd/King of Israel (2 Samuel 24:17; Psalm 78:72). In the New Testament, Jesus is the "good shepherd" (John 10:10-18), the "king of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2; 27:11,37), and ultimately the "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16).

God is the almighty King who rules like a shepherd. God "will search for the lost and bring back the strays. [God] will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.... [God] will shepherd the flock with justice" (Ezekiel 34:16). This is why words like love, affection, and deep loyalty are appropriate responses to this unusual sort of King. [\[Return to article\]](#)

⁵ God is our "**refuge**" (Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 9:9; 46:1), and "**fortress**" for those in need (Psalm 18:2; 144:2; Jeremiah 16:19). Refuge and fortress language speak of safety and protection in the midst of danger, threat, and need. [\[Return to article\]](#)

⁶ All of these qualities of God are reflections and products of God's "covenantal," hesed, or agape love. We must resist any attempt to separate these qualities from our foundational understanding that God is abounding in covenantal love because "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16).

God is a "**consuming fire**" (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29). This kind of fire "eats," "consumes," or "devours" what is in its path. Because God cares deeply about his created world, he is a "consuming fire" opposing evil and burning up what is contrary to his Shalom Kingdom purposes (e.g., injustice, idolatry, unrighteousness). This metaphor should be heard as good news in a world where evil often seems to reign unchecked.

God is "perfect [or majestic] in holiness" (Exodus 15:11; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 29:2; Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:3). Holiness can simply mean set apart or unique but when used in relation to God, the Almighty Creator and King, God's holiness has an implication of incredible power that burns up (hence the "consuming fire") every unholy (or "impure") element that gets close. Holiness is both an indication of this power and, in reference to Yahweh, a word that embodies God's moral qualities of righteousness, perfect wisdom, and justice.

While God is a holy and consuming fire, we can be comforted that God is "**slow to anger and abounding in tender mercy**" (Psalm 86:15; 145:8; Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). The Bible does not pretend that God never gets angry about all that "steals, kills, and destroys" (John 10:10; Nahum 1:3). A Shepherd King who is "abounding in tender mercy [*hesed or agape love*]" would not be truly loving without acting in the face of evil, injustice, and unrighteousness. God's anger is not a denial of his boundless love but a demonstration of it (see Isaiah 57:15-19). [[Return to article](#)]

⁷ **The primary relationship metaphor in the Bible is God's loving covenant with his people** (Genesis 12,15; Exodus 20; 1 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 31; Luke 22:20). Covenant relationships are based on mutual self-giving love, kindness, affection, loyalty and commitment. The analogies of King/people, parent/child, and husband/wife are all found in the Bible to help us understand God's hesed love to his people. God's love "endures forever" (Psalm 136; Lamentations 3:22). Since King/people is a metaphor that for most of us today does not carry a clear understanding of deep mutual affection displayed through self-giving actions, our closest understanding of the sacrificial and unconditional nature of covenant love is that displayed in families. The Bible draws on these comparisons in order to help us understand something of God's immense and abounding covenant love towards us.

God's actions are like those of a "**loving mother**" (Isaiah 66:12-13; Hosea 11:3-4), a "**caring father**" (Psalm 103:13; 68:5; Isaiah 63:16; Hosea 11:1-4; Luke 11:2-4, 13; Romans 8:15; Hebrews 12:7-11), and a "**faithful husband**" (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Deuteronomy 7:6-9). [[Return to article](#)]

⁸ **Article 1 follows the New Testament witness of being both monotheistic and trinitarian without any attempt to explain or resolve this tension.** This short statement that God is “eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” has profound implications for all 17 confessional articles that are to follow.

The New Testament provides clarity that this one, true, living God eternally exists as three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Paul affirms the *Shema* (God is One) but remarkably includes Jesus within this affirmation of oneness when he says: “yet for us there is but **one God**, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but **one Lord**, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (1 Corinthians 8:6). Paul then affirms how the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Father and from Jesus: “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). Peter in his confrontation of Ananias, uses the Holy Spirit interchangeably with the word God (Acts 5:3-4). **Although the word “Trinity” is not used in the New Testament, its fundamental reality is undeniable (cf. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2).**

The New Testament takes the earlier affirmations about the character and actions of God and connects them with Jesus. For example, while God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1-2:3; Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 40:28; 42:5), the New Testament declares that Jesus was there, actively involved as God’s agent of creation (Romans 1:25; Colossians 1:15-16).

There are significant and very practical theological and ethical implications concerning our conviction that God is eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

- a) **God is “eternal” and for all eternity has existed and continues to exist as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** Even though this truth was not revealed to the Old Testament people of God, it is an eternal truth.
- b) **God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means that in a way beyond our understanding, these three have been in “relationship” eternally.** God did not suddenly become relational after the creation of humanity, but God has always been in relationship within the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Relationship is fundamental to God.
- c) Human beings are created in God’s image (commonly referred to with the Latin expression *imago dei*) which means humans are also fundamentally relational beings. **To be human is to be relational: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18).**
- d) **God is one in purpose, character, authority, and mission.** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all share the same love, holiness, justice, authority, and mission. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all share in the creation, redemption, and final new creation. They are not in conflict with each other at any point.
- e) **God is one in discipleship expectations for the people of God.** Thus, obedience to the Son, for example, cannot be in conflict with obedience to the Father and/or the Holy Spirit. Discipleship language of “imitating God”

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(Ephesians 5:1), being “transformed into [Christ’s] image” (2 Corinthians 3:18), and reflecting the “fruit of the Spirit” are all ways of describing the same goal.

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⁹ The New Testament sometimes refers to God the Father as simply God. Paul declared to the Athenian crowd that God “gives everyone life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25) and it is from him that “we live and move and have our being” (17:28). At other times, the NT writers use the expression “God the Father” especially when they are also making statements that involve Jesus. God the Father has “placed his seal of approval” on the Son of Man (John 6:27) and given Jesus “honor and glory” (2 Peter 1:17). God the Father will receive the kingdom from the Son “after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24). God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and together with Jesus “sent” Paul (Galatians 1:1). God the Father will be glorified when every knee bows and tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11). God the Father together with Jesus are called upon to send “grace, mercy, and peace” (2 John 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2), “grace and peace” (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Titus 1:4), or “peace...and love” (Ephesians 6:23). God the Father is active in the New Testament, just as Jesus and the Spirit are active. [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁰ Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that the Father seeks “true worshipers” who “will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). This kind of worship is a “must” because God is spirit (John 4:24). Paul declares that “there is no difference between Jew and Gentile” since God “richly blesses all who call on him” for “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:12-13). The Psalmist writes that the “LORD is near to all who call on him” (145:18). God the Father is actively seeking worshipers and hearing (viz. responding) to the prayers of those who call on him. [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹¹ The Father sends the Son for the salvation of the world (John 3:16; 6:44-45). The Father adopts into his family all who respond in faith to the gospel (Galatians 4:4-5); Ephesians 1:5). The Father forgives (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 8:12; 1 John 1:9) and welcomes the forgiven into a new covenant (Hebrews 8:7-12; Luke 22:20). The New Testament is not simply the story of Jesus but the story of God the Father actively working in the world, sending Jesus, adopting believers, forgiving sinners, and covenanting himself to this group. This story of salvation is described more fully in Articles 4 and 5. [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹² The Father gives the Counselor (or Advocate who comes alongside believers; cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32). John 14:26 describes the Holy Spirit using the word Paracletos which is most often translated as “Counselor” (RSV), “Helper” (ESV), “Comforter” (KJV), or “Advocate” (NIV; NRSV). In this verse, Jesus states that the role of the Holy Spirit is to “teach you all things and [will] remind you of everything I [Jesus] have said to you.” Whatever word we choose to use as a translation for Paracletos must be

understood within this role of active teaching and reminding.

Article 1 highlights how the Father gives the Paracletos (John 14:16) to every believer (Acts 2:38-39; Galatians 4:6). [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹³ Describing God’s creative and redemptive love as what sustains this world is a reminder of his transcendent governance over creation (Genesis 2:1-3; Job 38:19-30; John 5:17) and his imminent presence with believers (Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 41:12; 54:4; 55:22; 1 John 4:12). It is also evidence of the unified work of the Godhead, as Father, Son, and Spirit sustain the world (Matthew 28:20b; John 16:5-15; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). All of creation and all of God’s ongoing work comes out of his love. [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁴ **This section of Article 1 needs to be read in light of the earlier confession that God is “eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” and in light of the heading of this section—“God the Son.”** These make it clear that Jesus has existed eternally as the Son within the Triune God (John 1:1; 17:5; Colossians 1:17) and thus did not become the divine Son at some point during or after his earthly life—even though his resurrection led to him being “declared to be the Son of God in power...by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:4 ESV). Jesus, incarnated with human flesh, as the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15, 19; Hebrews 1:3) was, in a mysterious way, also the pre-incarnate Son of God “in [whom] all things were created” (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:3). **Article 1 affirms this divine-human union without providing clarity about how the eternal divine Son could take on the fullness of human flesh and human nature without diminishment of either the divine or the human.** (For a discussion of “human nature,” see Article 3.)

Jesus’ conception by the Holy Spirit and birth to the virgin Mary demonstrates that the origin of the incarnate Jesus is from God (Luke 1:35) and is the very Immanuel presence of God (Matthew 1:22-23). From birth, Jesus is the “Son of God.” At twelve, he explains to Joseph and Mary that he stayed back at the temple because he “needed to be in [his] Father’s house” (Luke 2:49).

Although Jesus’ origin is from God, he took on the fullness of human nature/flesh (John 1:14; Romans 8:3; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:2; Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus’ taking on human nature/flesh means that he accepted human weakness (Hebrews 4:15; 5:2). Jesus “grew in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:52), became hungry (Matthew 21:18), needed to sleep (Mark 4:38), did not know certain things (Matthew 24:36), and suffered when he was tempted (Hebrews 2:18). The author of Hebrews insists that Jesus had to be made “fully human in every way” in order to “make atonement for the sins of the people” (2:17). [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁵ Colossians 1:19 records the astounding claim that “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus]” while Colossians 2:9 goes even further to say that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” Jesus was both the “fullness” of God

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(viz. character, essence, intention, will) and a reflection of this fullness in his life, ministry, teaching, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus revealed God in everything he did (John 1:1-18; 14:9-11). From birth to death, Jesus lived a fully obedient and sinless life (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 John 3:5). [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁶ What Jesus preached and embodied was all about the inaugurating of the “reign of God” or the “Kingdom of God” in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The New Testament writers explain that what Jesus proclaimed was the “gospel” or “good news” of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 8:12; cf. Luke 4:18-19). (See Article 5 for more about the nature of the “gospel.”) [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁷ Jesus’ death and resurrection conquered sin, death, and Satan (Romans 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 15:54-47; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:5-10) and made fully true the statement: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:17; cf. Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 2:32-36). Jesus is now also “head” of the Church (Colossians 1:15-20; Ephesians 1:20-23; 5:23). (For more detail about the various aspects of Jesus atoning work, see Article 5.) [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁸ Jesus invites every person in the world, both Gentiles who were “far” and Jews who were “near” (Ephesians 2:11-18; cf. Matthew 11:28; John 6:35-38), to reconciliation/peace with God (Romans 5:1; 2 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Jesus calls all those who respond to follow him in the “way of the cross” (Matthew 10:38; Mark 1:16-20; 8:34-38; Luke 9:23; 14:27). [\[Return to article\]](#)

¹⁹ Between Jesus’ ascension and his second coming when he will return in glory (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 1:7), he sits at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69-70; Hebrews 10:12-14; 1 Peter 3:22), interceding and advocating for believers before the Father (Romans 8:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25; 8:24; 1 John 2:1) and calling them to be his witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 10:18; 2 Corinthians 5:20). [\[Return to article\]](#)

²⁰ **This section of Article 1 also needs to be read in light of the earlier confession that God is “eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” and in light of the heading of this section—“God the Holy Spirit.”** This makes it clear that the Holy Spirit has existed eternally within the Triune God. **The Holy Spirit is fully the presence of God – God is One - not some secondary offshoot of God.** The Holy Spirit fully represents the power, presence, and wisdom of God (Matthew 10:20; 12:28; Mark 3:29; Luke 1:35; Ephesians 2:18). [\[Return to article\]](#)

As mentioned in Note 12, John 14:26 describes the Holy Spirit using the word Paracletos which is most often translated as “Counselor” (RSV), “Helper” (ESV),

“Comforter” (KJV), or “Advocate” (NIV; NRSV).

There are some differences between how the Spirit is described as working in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the OT, the Spirit only came upon certain people like prophets (Numbers 11:29; 2 Chronicles 24:20); leaders (Deuteronomy 34:9); judges (Judges 3:10; 6:24); anointed kings (1 Samuel 16:13); and skilled artists appointed to build the Tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-5). The Spirit provided physical power (Judges 11:29; 14:6, 19; 15:14), leadership ability (Numbers 11:24-25), wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9), or prophetic ability (Micah 3:7-8; Ezekiel 11:5) to achieve God’s purposes. The Spirit could also come and go from a person as in the case of Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). David was also fearful of God’s Spirit leaving him (Psalm 51:11).

The New Testament connects the Holy Spirit directly with Jesus. The Holy Spirit “testifies about” Jesus (John 15:26), “glorifies” Jesus (John 16:14), and is identified as the “Spirit of his Son” (Galatians 4:6). The wonderful news is that with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he is now given to every disciple of Jesus (Acts 2:1-4, 16-18; cf. Joel 2:28-29) and will not leave us but “be with [us] forever” (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit gives each believer “gifts of the Spirit” for the “common good” (1 Corinthians 12:1-7).

Believers, whose bodies are “temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 16:19), are to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16) “live by the Spirit” (5:25), “keep in step with the Spirit” (5:15), be “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), and demonstrate the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit transforms character (2 Corinthians 3:17-18) so that believers can reflect God’s “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). This Spirit, also called the “Advocate” or “Comforter” (John 14:26), will “teach you all things” (v.26), “be in you” (v.17), “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13), and give you “life” (John 6:63; Romans 8:10). If “anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9).

We do not understand the Triune God, and especially Jesus, if we fail to appreciate the essential role of the Holy Spirit in the lives and mission of God’s people in the world. The Holy Spirit is also not an “it” but a divine person within the three persons of the Trinity. Among many other activities, the Holy Spirit speaks (Acts 13:2), gives out Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11), intercedes for believers (Romans 8:26-27), and glorifies Jesus (John 16:14). These actions demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is a person not simply an impersonal force.

²¹ The Holy Spirit is involved in working in the hearts and minds of humans convicting them of sin (John 16:8-11). The work of convicting is motivated by God’s love with the goal of prompting confession, repentance, and restoration (Revelation 3:19). This should not be understood in the legal sense of “condemnation” which produces a separation from God’s love (cf. John 3:17-18; Romans 8:31-39) but in the sense of God’s convicting love prompting people’s consciences, revealing truth about the human condition, and creating the desire to respond to this saving love.

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Romans 8:2 declares that believers “are now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit who gives [them] life.” Finally, John 16:13 confidently asserts that when the “Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” [\[Return to article\]](#)

²² The Holy Spirit is active as believers are cleansed and baptized into one body (viz., the Church; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13; 6:11; Ephesians 4:4). Because of this truth, we are to make “every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The Spirit unifies the Church. [\[Return to article\]](#)

²³ The Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Acts 2:1-4, 38; 10:45; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18), gifts and empowers each one for ministries and witness (Mark 13:11; Acts 1:8; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12, 14; Ephesians 4:12-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11) and produces “fruit” demonstrated in speech and action (Galatians 5:16-23). The Holy Spirit “testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6-7). [\[Return to article\]](#)

²⁴ The Holy Spirit also comforts, intercedes, and reassures God’s children in their weakness (John 14:6-17, 26; Romans 8:23-27; 15:13; Ephesians 3:14-21; Galatians 5:5). The testimony of the Spirit assures us of eternal life (1 John 3:24; 5:6-13). God gives his Spirit as a seal, a guarantee, that he will accomplish our salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 5:5). [\[Return to article\]](#)