

# The Essence of God

## Introduction:

By “essence” we mean the “substance” of “being” of God. This in fact is incomprehensible, because God is different from anything we can grasp with our finite minds. Consequently, the Scriptures never discuss the Being or Essence of God apart from His attributes, inasmuch as God is what He reveals Himself to be.

## I. The Essence of God — Revealed

John 4:24

### A. God is Life

John 4:24 begins, “God IS...,” not “God was...”

The very essence of God is life?

#### 1. What is life?

“Life” cannot be properly defined. Since it is the nature of God, it is incomprehensible. Life is not just “existence,” but that which embraces relationship in activity.

Life is really an “intuition” —we can describe it, but not define it.

#### 2. Other Scriptures Declare God is Life.

John 5:26; Jeremiah 10:10; Acts 14:15

#### 3. Comparative Examples Show God to be Living.

God is often compared to false gods by the fact that He is living. Compare Jeremiah 10:10-16 with Habakuk 2:18-20

### B. God is Spirit. (vs. Materialism)

The context of John 4:24 aids the understanding this Scripture. The woman of Samaria was actually asking where God was to be found — Jerusalem or Gerizim? The reply of the Lord Jesus Christ was that God was unlimited - He is a Spirit.

Note: The article “a” is sometimes omitted in modern ‘versions’ of the Bible (RSV;NASV;NIV;NKJB). The distinction is important, and the rendering in the Authorized, King James Version is correct — God is A Spirit, in distinction to all other spirits.

#### 1. What does this involve?

“Spirit” is in contrast to “matter.” This verse of Scripture teaches:

a) God is Incorporeal (without body) - Luke 24:39

b) God is Invisible (not seen) - Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 1:17 — see also: Romans 1:20; I Timothy 6:16

c) God is Unlimited (not contained) - Psalm 139:7

#### 2. Some Difficulties to be explained.

People sometimes point to apparent inconsistencies in the above explanation of God as a Spirit.

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- a) A number of references to God in the Bible say He has feet (Hebrews 1:10), fingers (Psalm 8:3), eyes (II Chronicles 16:9; Isaiah 59:1), hands (Numbers 11:23), arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).  
How can we say He is incorporeal?

Answer — Such expressions of God are anthropomorphic, meaning that God represents Himself in human terms (for our benefit!)

- b) Other references tell us God was seen of men, yet John 1:18 says no man can see God.

Answer — A Spirit can be manifested in visible form. e.g. The dove at Jesus' baptism. It is the essence of God we cannot see.

### 3. What does this mean?

John 4:24 means that God is not apprehended through our senses, but by our spirit.

We worship God in spirit and in truth.

- a) In Spirit as distinguished from place or form. John 4:20-21; Acts 7:48; 17:24-25.  
b) In Truth as distinguished from false conception resulting from imperfect knowledge. John 4:22; 17:17; I John 4:6; Isaiah 8:20.

### 4. Other Scriptures declare God to be Immaterial.

God forbade idolatry on the basis that no man had seen Him, neither was He anything material. See: Deuteronomy 4:15-20, 23

## C. God is a Person. (vs. Pantheism)

"They that worship HIM..." (Not 'It!') Personality may be described as "self-consciousness" and "self-determination" (will)

Person involves 3 things:

- a) Intellect - power of thinking. "I Know." e.g. Exodus 3:7.  
b) Sensibility - power of feeling. "I Feel." e.g. Exodus 2:24-25  
c) Volition - power of willing. "I Will." e.g. Exodus 3:17

God has Personality because:

1. He has Personal Names. — Exodus 3:14; Psalm 3:14; Judges 6:24
2. He is Contrasted with "Dead" Idols. — Jeremiah 10:10-16
3. He is Addressed by Personal Pronouns. — John 17:3; Psalm 16:1-2
4. He has the Characteristics of Personality.
  - a) Grief — Genesis 6:6
  - b) Anger — I Kings 11:9
  - c) Jealousy — Deuteronomy 6:15
  - d) Love — Revelation 3:19
  - e) Hatred — Proverbs 6:16
5. God is the "I AM" and the "I WILL"

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- a) Exodus 3:14 — “I AM” - implies “self-consciousness.”
- b) Exodus 6:6-8 — “I WILL” - implies “self-determination.”
6. He has a Personal Relationship to the Universe
  - a) He created it.  
This shows interest.
  - b) He sustains it — Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17  
This shows concern
7. He has a Personal Relationship with man  
Man was created for fellowship, and only two personalities can have this kind of relationship.

## II. The Nature of God — His Unity (vs. Polytheism, Dualism, Tritheism)

### A. The Meaning of the “Unity of God.”

By this we mean a “unity of essence” — not personality.

The fact that God is a Spirit (therefore uncontainable), and the fact that He is omnipresent (everywhere) logically precludes the existence of more than one God.

### B. Scripture Declares the Unity of God.

Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6-8; 45:5; John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:5-6; I Timothy 2:5.

### C. Scripture use of the word “One”.

Often, the term “one” is used in the sense of “compound unity.”

For example, two may be one, Genesis 2:24; or, many may be one, Philippians 2:2 “being of one accord, of one mind”. However, this is not the way that we are to understand the doctrine of the Trinity, which is not violated by the doctrine of the Unity of God.

## III. The Nature of God — The Trinity (vs. Unitarianism)

### A. The Unity of God and the Trinity of God Contrasted.

Unity = unity of essence. (One God!)

Trinity = tri-unity of personality. (Three Persons!)

The doctrine of the Trinity is one that we can never fully comprehend — it is to be believed that is what the Bible teaches.

### B. The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament.

#### 1. Seen in the “Uni-plural” Name for “God”.

The Hebrew word translated “God” is “Elohim” which is plural. Genesis 1:26-27.

#### 2. Seen in the Appearance of “The Angel of the Lord.”

The Theophany is God (Christ) in angelic form.

Carefully study Genesis 22:11, 12, 15, 16 and compare with John 8:56-58. See also: Genesis 16:7-10, 13; 18:1-2, 13-22; 19:24.

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3. Seen in the Work of the Holy Spirit.  
See: Genesis 1:2; Judges 6:34.

### C. The Doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament

1. Seen in the "Great Commission." — Matthew 28:19 - The word "name" is singular.
2. Seen in the "Apostolic Benediction." — II Corinthians 13:14
3. Seen at the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. — Matthew 3:16-17
4. Seen in the Teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ — John 14:16 - "I," "The Father," "Another Comforter."
5. Seen in Paul's Teachings — I Corinthians 12:4-6 "Spirit," "Lord," "God."
6. Seen in Consideration of the Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit.  
A Father Who is God — Romans 1:7  
A Son Who is God — Hebrews 1:8  
A Spirit Who is God — Acts 5:3-4

God's working amongst men (especially in salvation) may be seen as:  
From the Father; By the Son; Through the Spirit. This is also seen in prayer —  
Ephesians 2:18.

### D. Observations Concerning the Trinity

1. We do not mean Three Gods (Tritheism). — ONE God (in essence); THREE Persons.
2. We hold to Distinct Personifies. — The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Spirit.

### E. Illustration of the Trinity

1. The Egg  
An Egg consist of "shell," "white," and "yoke." This illustration fails in the sense that each component by itself in not an egg.
2. Human Relationships  
I am a man.  
I am a father to my son.  
I am a son to my father.  
  
Thus I am 3 in 1 — a man, a father, a son.  
However, this illustration fails because it does not teach 3 persons, only 3 relationships — and could well be used by people such as Jehovah's Witnesses to explain away the Trinity.
3. Water — H<sub>2</sub>O  
Water can exist in 3 phases — solid (ice), liquid, and gas (steam). It can also exist in all three stages at one time. Whatever the phase, it is all the same essence.

### F. The Best Verse on the Trinity

I John 5:7 is a verse of Scripture that actually teaches the doctrine of the Trinity.  
All modern translations either omit the verse, or, like the RSV and the NASV deceitfully spread verse 6 into a verse 7, omitting the teaching of the Trinity.

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If Satan can convince one that the doctrine of the Trinity is false, Jesus ceases to be God and therefore did not live a sinless life and cannot not pay the penalty for anyone's sin.