



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

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Attempts to Deny the Godhead (Part 1)

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That there is only one God, yet that one God consists of three persons known as the Godhead (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9, KJV), Trinity, or Triune God, is an often misunderstood concept. When most people hear the term “God,” they think of God the Father. However, the Son and the Holy Spirit are just as much God as is the Father. All three personalities make up the one Triune God. This series of articles will show what is meant by the term Godhead. It will also examine and evaluate the main attacks made against the biblical Godhead in early church history and the subsequent clarification statements found in the creeds that developed from the councils that met to address the early controversies.

Comprehending The Godhead

We must not assume that every time the word “God” appears in the English translations of the Bible that the Father is exclusively in mind. Context must always determine the meaning in each reference to God. We can, however, know that every time “God” (not “god”) appears, it always refers to the divine nature. Since God exists and the Bible is the inspired word of God, we are assured that what the Bible teaches about the nature of God is absolutely true. Although we are limited and unable to exhaustively comprehend everything about God (cf. Job 11:7; 26:14; Isa. 40:28; 55:9; Rom. 11:33-34), there are some truths we can know about God (Deut. 29:29). God has revealed Himself through nature (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20), through the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17), through history (Pr. 14:34; Dan. 2:21;

4:17; Jn. 19:11), in a limited sense, through humanity (Gen. 1:26-27), and in the fullest sense, through Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:7; Col. 1:15; 2:9).

Proving The Godhead

The God of the Bible is a unity consisting of three eternally distinct personalities in one divine essence (Theissen, 135). The term “Trinity” was coined centuries ago to describe this truth. Of course, the doctrine did not originate with the coining of the term; rather, the doctrine is from God. The term “trinity,” or the Triune God, also describes this truth about the Godhead. There is only one God, and the divine nature is undivided and indivisible (Deut. 4:35, 39; 1 Kgs. 8:60; Mk. 12:29-32; 1 Tim. 2:5). However, “unity” is not the same as “unit.” There are three distinct personalities in this one essence of deity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). This is not a three-fold nature of God, but three personalities, each having the essence of deity and making up the one Godhead. Although illustrations are not fully adequate, consider the following examples of pluralities spoken of as being singular in the Bible: believers (Jn. 17:21-22; Acts 4:32; 1 Cor. 12:20); husband and wife (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31); and Paul and Apollos (1 Cor. 3:6, 8). It should not, therefore, surprise us to find a plurality of personalities in the one true God of the Bible.

The term “Godhead” occurs three times in the New Testament (KJV), each time from a different, but closely related word. “Godhead” in Acts 17:29, also translated “Divine Nature” (NKJ, NAS) and

“divine being” (ESV), is from the Greek word *theion* (θεῖον), which means “divine being, divinity;” also “of the godhead and everything that belongs to it” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3-4) (Bauer, 353). This word seems to emphasize the *quality* of the divine nature. In Romans 1:20, “Godhead,” which is also translated “divinity” (ASV) and “divine nature” (ESV), is from the Greek word *theiotes* (θειότης), which means “divinity, divine nature” (Bauer, 354). This word seems to emphasize the attributes of deity which are *perceived* through the things that are made. In Colossians 2:9, “Godhead,” which is also translated “Deity” (NAS), is from the Greek word *theotes* (θεότης), which means “Deity, divinity; the fullness of Deity; power of Deity” (Bauer, 358). This word seems to emphasize the *totality* of all that enters into the concept of the divine nature.

Proving that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equally God can *only* be accomplished by allowing the Scriptures to speak for themselves. The following argument is not original with this writer, but has been used and defended successfully for many years.

If the Bible teaches there is one God, and if the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each distinct personalities, and yet are referred to as God, then the Bible teaches that there are three distinct personalities in the one Godhead.

The Bible teaches there is one God (Deut. 6:4). Although each is

God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct personalities. The Father is referred to as God (1 Cor. 1:3), but the Father is not the Son (Jn. 17:20-21) nor is the Father the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:16-17). The Son is referred to as God (Jn. 1:1-2, 14), but the Son is not the Father (Heb. 1:5) nor is the Son the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26). The Holy Spirit is referred to as God (Acts 5:3-4), but the Holy Spirit is not the Father (Mt. 3:16-17) nor is the Holy Spirit the Son (Jn. 15:26). Therefore, there are three distinct personalities in the one Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19; Jn. 14:16; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2).

“Essence” And “Attributes”

Before examining attacks made against the Godhead in early church history, it is important for us to understand the nature of the Godhead. We must realize that all three members of the Triune God possess the nature of God. This is what makes God, God! No other being consists of the divine nature, except God, and only the being that contains the divine

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nature can truly be God! To deny any aspect of the nature of God to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit is to deny the biblical Godhead.

It must be recognized here that God's essence and attributes are so interwoven and related to each other that one cannot be totally considered in the absence of the others. We will consider each as distinct only for the purpose of this study. Each of these qualities is complete and perfect in its own right, and each adds to the sum total of God.

"Essence" refers to "substance; that which underlies all outward manifestations; that in which the qualities/attributes inhere" (Thiessen, 119). If there were no essence there could be no attributes. Humanity is, in a limited way, like God's essence in that human beings are spirit-beings like God.

"Attributes" refer to the objective qualities that inhere in the substance, or essence. They denote the way in which God exists and operates (Thiessen, 123). God's attributes can be analyzed under two categories. First, God consists of non-moral attributes. These are those that do not of themselves involve moral qualities, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. Human beings cannot be like God in these attributes. Second, God consists of moral attributes. These are those which involve moral qualities, such as holiness, love, justice, and many more. To a limited extent, human beings can, and must, become like God in these attributes (cf. Lev. 11:44; Mt. 5:48; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn. 4:9-17).

Essence of the Godhead

As we consider the essence of the Godhead, it must be kept in mind that this essence applies to all three members of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It must be noted that when Christ became flesh, He did not cease being God. He did have physical limitations in that He could not physically be in two places at the same time and He could become tired and hungry, but even in His human nature, He was also of divine nature.

First, God is a spirit (Jn. 4:24; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). God is not physical, except when He became incarnate in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14; Gal. 4:4). A spirit does not have flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39). God is not like material things (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:23). Expressions that present God as having such things as hands, eyes, ears, and arms are "anthropomorphic," which term refers to ascribing human characteristics to things not human, or infinite concepts that are ex-

pressed in terms that we can understand. God is invisible (Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17). No man has seen God nor can see God (Jn. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16). Passages that indicate people saw God are figurative (Ex. 24:9-11). It was not the essence of God that was seen but the visual representation of God (cf Ex. 33:19-20; Num. 12:7-8) (Geisler and Howe, 83). Can a person see his own face, or does he see a reflection of it? People can see the manifestations of God when those manifestations are embodied in physical forms such as angels, and they can see God in the sense of seeing His works. Since God is spirit, God is not subject to physical limitations, except when God became flesh in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14).

Second, God is a personality. While we have personality with a physical body, God has personality without having a physical body. Some personality traits of God are self awareness—"I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14), intellect (Gen. 18:19; Ex. 3:17; Acts 15:18), capacity to love (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:7-10), capacity of sorrow (Gen. 6:6), capacity to be angry (Deut. 1:37), capacity for jealousy (Ex. 20:5), and compassion (Ps. 111:4). God lives (Mt. 16:16; 1 Thes. 1:9). Since life implies power and activity, God is not just an "influence" or "force." Thus, God is not to be compared with idols (cf. Ex. 20:4-5; Acts 17:24-25).

Third, God is self-evident. The question "From where did God come?" is irrelevant. God is not dependent upon any outside factor for His existence. In fact, the very meaning of the term "Jehovah," or "Yahweh" (Ex. 3:14), is "the always existing one; the uncaused cause" (Gilmore, 6). God's existence is not grounded in God's will, but in His nature. If God could have caused himself to be, then He could cause Himself not to be, but God's perfection and unchanging nature prevent this. There has never been a time, nor will there ever be a time, that God's nature was not exactly as it is now!

Fourth, God is eternal (Gen. 21:33; Ps. 90:2-4 [cf. Mic. 5:2]; 102:27; Isa. 57:15; 1 Tim. 6:16). God is infinite in relation to time. As creator, God is the very cause of time. Time is of no essence with God (2 Pet. 3:8). Eternity for God is now; God is aware of past, present, and future. In fact, past, present, and future are only in relation to humanity, not God.

Fifth, God is immense and vast (Jer. 23:24; 2 Chr. 2:6; 1 Kgs. 8:27). God is infinite in relation to space. Although related to the attribute of omnipresence, the emphasis here is on the immeasurableness of God's nature.

— To Be Continued

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Fall 2026 Semester Begins Aug. 3rd

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Day	Time	Lakeland Classes	Instructor	Credit
Monday	___ 8:30-12:00	1 & 2 Thessalonians & Galatians (137)	Bauer	3
	___ 1:00-4:15	Hermeneutics (100)	Beals	3
Tuesday	___ 8:30-12:00	Preacher & His Work (107)	Wheeler	3
	___ 8:30-12:00	English I - Grammar (124)	Kenyon	3
	___ 1:00-4:15	World Religions (275)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	___ 8:30-12:00	Sermon Prep & Delivery (203)	Bauer	3
	___ 8:30-12:00	Greek I (124)	Kenyon	3
	___ 1:00-4:15	Minor Prophets (246)	Kenyon	3
Thursday	___ 8:30-12:00	Old Testament History (239)	Ridgeway	3
	___ 1:00-4:15	Life of Paul (262)	Ford	3
Friday	___ 8:30-12:00	Hebrews (210)	McDonald	3
	___ 1:00-4:15	Ezekiel & Daniel (214)	D. Stearsman	3
Extension Classes				
Thursday	___ 7:00-9:30	TBA (Hosted by Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville)	TBA	2.5
Thursday	___ 6:00-8:30	Acts (118) (Hosted by Tenth Street church of Christ, Apopka)	Kenyon	2.5

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