

The One True God

Theology Proper

Donald Macleod in Behold your God

- “God is not simply a great sight, the object of speculative curiosity. The revelation of His glory and the whole theological process which legitimately follows from it is holy ground. We cannot stand as superiors over God or His Word. We may not coldly and detachedly analyze and collate the great self-revealing deeds and utterances of Jehovah. We may not theologize without emotion and commitment. The doctrine must thrill and exhilarate. It must humble and cast down.... Theology has lost its way, and indeed its very soul, if it cannot say with John, ‘I fell at His feet as dead (Rev. 1:17).’”

Our Objectives

- 1. To gain a basic understanding of the biblical teaching about the Person and work of God.
- 2. To be challenged to further study.
- 3. To develop a desire for closer fellowship with God
- 4. To glorify God.

The Existence of God

The Existence of God

- A. Man's intuitive knowledge
 - Universal
 - Necessary
 - Scriptural
 - Rejected
- B. The Classic Rational Arguments

Two Approaches

- **Evidentialist**

- A common pool of facts
- The careful use of reason
- Leads to...
 - Agreement of the truth
 - Possible acceptance of Christ

- **Presuppositionalist**

- God has revealed Himself.
- All men know that revelation.
- Man suppresses that knowledge—he is dead!
- The Spirit must regenerate thru the Word.
- Proof of God: impossible & unnecessary

The Cosmological Argument

- Argument from cause & effect
- Contribution: There must be a First Cause
- Weaknesses:
 - Begs the question of the need for a first cause.
 - Logically, God must have a cause.
 - Doesn't demand a single, personal cause.

The Teleological Argument

- Argument from order & design
- Contribution: The First Cause is intelligent & outside the universe.
- Weaknesses:
 - Intelligent Designer may be finite like his creation.
 - Intelligent Designer doesn't equal a personal God.

The Ontological Argument

- Argument from the idea of God
- Contribution: The First Cause must be infinite & perfect.
- Weakness:
 - Impossible to deduce real existence from abstract thought or imagination.

The Moral Argument

- Argument from conscience
- Contribution: The First Cause has a moral nature.
- Weaknesses:
 - Doesn't prove, but assumes moral law is objective.
 - Doesn't necessarily point to a being of absolute perfections.

Different Christian Perspectives on the Classic Proofs

- 1) Classic: force rational unbelievers to admit God's existence.
- 2) Modified: offer grounds to the believer that his faith is rational.
- 3) Worthless: are of no value whatsoever to believers or unbelievers.
- 4) Presuppositional: use the proofs (but from the Scripture) to remove any legitimate objections.

The Biblical Position

- All men believe in the existence of God.
- Existence of God is taken for granted:
 - Gen. 1:1
 - Heb. 11:6
 - Ex. 3:14
- Why?
 - 1 Cor. 1:21
 - Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14, 18)

Why Do We Believe There is a God?

- Because God has revealed Himself!
- Generally—through creation & providence
- Morally—through the law written on the heart
- Personally—through the incarnation of His Son
- Propositionally—through His Word
- Savingly—only through the Spirit & the Word



No One Like Him

The Nature of God

God's Incomprehensibility



- The reality of God infinitely surpasses what any of His creatures ever perceive Him to be.
 - Not—"unable to be understood"
 - Rather—"unable to be fully understood."

The Biblical Support

- General

- Job 26:14 - "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?"
- Is. 55:8-9; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 1 Tim. 6:16

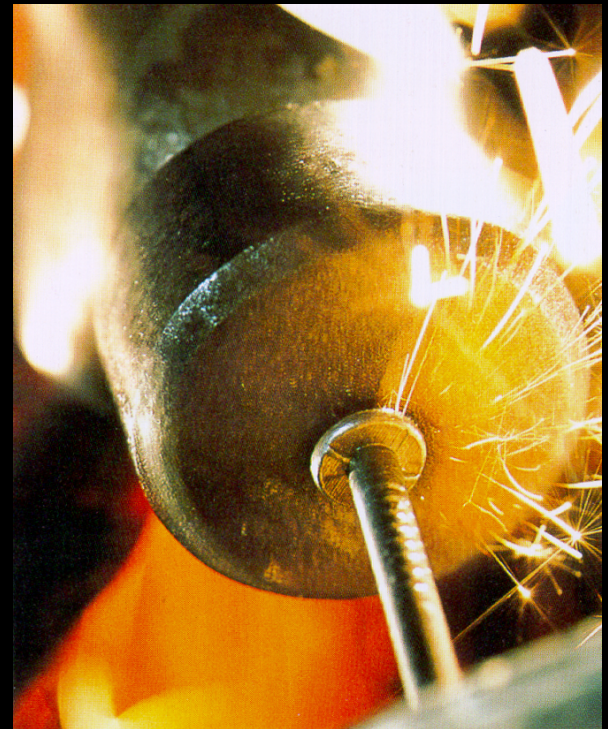
- Specific Attributes

- Being & Nature (Job 11:7-9; Ps. 145:3)
- Understanding (Ps. 147:5)
- Knowledge (Ps. 139:1-6)
- Counsels, Plans, & Decisions (Rom. 11:33-36)



God's Self-Revelation

- Two tools to help us understand God...
 - Anthropomorphism
 - Attributes human characteristics to God.
 - Anthropopathism
 - Attributes human feelings and emotions to God.



The Nature of God

I. What God Is Not

- A. Anti-theism / Atheism – there is no god.
 - 1) Practical atheists—godless people who live as if there is no god (Ps. 10:4b; 14:1).
 - 2) Theoretical atheists—those who base their denial on rational argument.
 - Dogmatic—denies the existence of God.
 - Skeptical—not possible for us to determine (agnostics).
 - Critical —has not yet seen valid proof for the existence of God.

I. What God Is Not

- B. Pantheism – all is god.
 - Several different forms:
 - Hindus; Transcendentalists.
 - God is all and all is God.
 - Reality is an amorphous fusion of all matter and spirit.
 - All personal being is swallowed in one predominant over-soul.

I. What God Is Not

- C. Polytheism – there are many gods.
 - Poly = many; theos = God; plurality of gods.
 - Forms: ancient religions; Hinduism; Zen Buddhism; Mormonism
 - Often closely tied to the worship of nature
 - Popular counterpart of pantheism.

I. What God Is Not

- D. God of the other monotheistic faith:
Islam
 - 1 Cor. 10:19-20 – gods of the nations are demons, masquerading as their gods (cf. Deut. 32:17).

II. What God Is

- A. A Being

- God's being is not identical to the created universe.
- Feinberg: "Omnipresence demands that God be somehow present at every point in space, but he isn't present as each point in space."

II. What God Is

- B. Living/Alive

- Jer. 10:10 - But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King.
- 1 Th. 1:9 - You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.
- Many passages comparing living God with idols; Is. 44:9-20.

II. What God Is

- C. Infinite

- There are no limitations on God, except the laws of logic and his other attributes.
- God is infinite in His attributes.
 - Does not mean God has an infinite amount of that quality.
 - Means God possesses that attribute in a different way than any other being in the universe.

II. What God Is

- A. A Being
- B. Living/Alive
- C. Infinite
- D. Spirit



D. Spirit

- Immaterial
 - John 4:24
 - Luke 24:39
- Invisible
 - 1 Tim. 1:17
 - John 1:18
 - Col. 1:15
 - Rom. 1:20

D. Spirit

- Several potential misunderstandings:
- 1) Those passages in which God appears in a physical manifestation.
 - E.g., OT— Gen. 32:30-man; Ex. 3:1-6—burning bush; Gen. 16:7-13—Angel of the Lord; NT – Matt. 3:16-17-dove.

D. Spirit

- Several potential misunderstandings:
- 2) Those references to God having bodily parts.
 - E.g., hand (Ps. 139:10; Is. 65:2; etc.); eyes (1 Kings 8:29; 2 Chron. 16:9; Pro. 15:3); ears (Neh. 1:6; Is. 37:17); face (Gen. 19:13; Ps. 17:15; 34:16, etc.)

D. Spirit

- Several potential misunderstandings:
- 3) Those passages that talk about our eventually seeing God.
 - Job 19:25-27—I will see God.
 - Matt. 5:8 – the pure in heart will see God.
 - 1 John 3:2 – we will see him just as he is
 - Heb. 12:14 – w/o holiness, no one will see the Lord.
 - Rev. 22:4 – we will see the face of the Lamb.

D. Spirit

- Implications of God's being a Spirit
 - He is Invisible.
 - He is Incorruptible.
 - He is Immortal.
- Application of God's being a Spirit
 - We cannot perceive Him by the senses (John 1:18).
 - We should not make any form to represent God (Dt. 4:15-19).
 - We should worship Him in spirit & in truth (John 4:24).

II. What God Is

- A. A Being
- B. Living/Alive
- C. Infinite
- D. Spirit
- E. Person/Personal



E. Person/Personal

- 1) Rational
 - a) Self-conscious
 - Ex. 3:14
 - Is. 43:10
 - Is. 54:7-8
 - 2 Tim. 3:16
 - b) Self-determining
 - Job 42:2
 - Ps. 115:3
 - Eph. 1:11
- 2) Personal

II. What God Is

- A. A Being
- B. Living/Alive
- C. Infinite
- D. Spirit
- E. Person/Personal
- F. Trinity



The Trinity Defined—What It's Not

- A. Tritheism – three gods
- B. Modalism – not three Persons but only One Person in different modes
 - Sabellianism, or Modalistic Monarchianism
 - Only one God who assumes three different roles or modes.
 - E.g., a man can be a husband, a father, and a son at the same time.
 - United Pentecostals (aka, Jesus-only Pentecostals or oneness Pentecostals)

The Trinity Defined—What It's Not

- C. Subordinationism (Arianism) – only the Father is in essence God; Christ and the Spirit are created and subordinate.
 - Denies the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - Arius, bishop of Alexandria (died 336 AD)
 - God the Son & the Spirit were created by God the Father.
 - The Son existed before the rest of creation and is far greater than the rest of creation, he is still not equal to the Father in all his attributes.

The Trinity Defined—What It's Not

- C. Subordinationism (Arianism) – only the Father is in essence God; Christ and the Spirit are created and subordinate.
 - Argued from Christ being the only begotten Son (e.g., John 1:14, 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9).
 - But originally monogenes described an only child (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38).
 - One of a kind.
 - E.g., Heb. 11:17

The Trinity Defined—What It's Not

- C. Subordinationism (Arianism) – only the Father is in essence God; Christ and the Spirit are created and subordinate.
 - Argued from Col. 1:15—“firstborn of all creation.”
 - Used most often of one who is preeminent but is not the literal firstborn (cf. Ps. 89:27).

The Trinity Defined—What It's Not

- C. Subordinationism (Arianism) – only the Father is in essence God; Christ and the Spirit are created and subordinate.
 - Arius's views were condemned at the Council of Nicea in AD 325.
 - Today: Jehovah's Witnesses

The Trinity Defined—What It Is

- A. God is one in His essential Being or constitutional nature (essence).
- B. In the one divine Being there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit .
- C. The essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons.

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
 - 1) Plural pronouns and plural verbs
 - Gen. 1:26—pronouns and verb “make” plural in Hebrew
 - Gen. 3:22
 - Gen. 11:7—pronouns and verb “go down” plural

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
 - 2) Elohim
 - Plural in form
 - Usually gets a singular verb, except in:
 - Gen. 20:13 – caused to wander = plural
 - Gen. 35:7 – revealed = plural
 - 2 Sam. 7:23 – God went (plural) to redeem Israel.

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
 - 3) Plural forms of Creator and Maker
 - God is referred to as creator or maker and in Hebrew the word for creator or maker is plural.
 - Job 35:10; Ps. 149:2; Eccl. 12:1; Is. 54:5

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
 - 4) Distinctions between members of the Godhead
 - Gen. 19:24 – Lord rained...from the Lord
 - Hos. 1:7 – God is speaking: “I will deliver them by the Lord their God.”
 - Ps. 2:7 (v. 4= Lord speaking—he said to me, you are my Son); 45:6-7 (cf. Heb. 1:8—applies it to Christ); 110:1 (cf. Matt. 22:41-46)
 - Is. 48:16—note verse 12—the first and the last; “the LORD God has sent me and His Spirit”
 - Gen. 6:3—the Lord said, “My Spirit will not always strive with man.”

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
 - 5) The Angel of the Lord
 - Identified as YHWH yet distinguished from Him.
 - Gen. 16:7-13
 - Gen. 18:1-21
 - Gen. 22:11-18
 - Gen. 31:11-13
 - Ex. 3:2-5

The Trinity Defended

- B. The Scriptural Evidence of the Three Propositions
 - There is One God.
 - Christ is God.
 - Christ is Distinct from the Father.
 - Or...
 - God is three Persons.
 - Each Person is fully God.
 - There is one God.

There is One God.

- Deut. 6:4 - "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!
- Deut. 4:39 – "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.
- Deut. 32:39 – 'See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me.
- Is. 45:5 – "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God (cf. Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 9; 45:5-6, 21-22).

There is One God.

- John 17:3 -- This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
- 1 Cor. 8:4-6 – we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.
- 1 Tim. 2:5 –there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
- Jam. 2:19 – You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

Christ Is God.

- 1) He is called God.
 - Is. 9:6; John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20

Christ Is God.

- 2) OT descriptions of YHWH are applied to Christ in the NT.
 - a) Attributes
 - b) Work of creation
 - Cf. John 1:3 and Is. 42:5
 - c) Worship (cf. Ex. 20:3, 5)
 - John 5:23; Heb. 1:6; Phil. 2:10-11 (cf. Isa. 45:23)

Christ Is God.

- 3) The name of YHWH is applied to Christ.
 - a) Matt. 3:3; cf. Is. 40:3
 - b) John 12:41; cf. Is. 6:1
 - c) 1 Pet. 3:15; cf. Is. 8:13
 - d) Eph. 4:7-8; cf. Ps. 68:18
 - e) Heb. 1:6; cf. Ps. 97:7
 - f) Heb. 1:10-12; cf. Ps. 102:25-27
 - g) John 8:58; cf. Ex. 3:14

Christ Is Distinct From the Father.

- Ps. 2:7 - "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.
- Psalm 110:1 -- The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."; cf. Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13.
- Matthew 27:46 -- About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Christ Is Distinct From the Father.

- John 5:32—another (cf. v.31), 37—the Father
- Galatians 4:4 – God sent forth His Son
- Rev. 1:1 – the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
- B. The Scriptural Evidence of the Three Propositions
- C. The New Testament Passages that link the members of the Trinity.

C. The NT Passages that Link the Trinity

- Matt. 3:16-17 - After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

C. The NT Passages that Link the Trinity

- Matt. 28:19 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."
 - a) Not—"into the names [plural]..."; or "into the name of the Father, into the name of the Son, and into the name of the Spirit."
 - b) Not—"into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [omitting the recurring articles]."

C. The NT Passages that Link the Trinity

- 1 Cor. 1:3
- 1 Cor. 12:4-6
- 2 Cor. 13:14
- 2 Th. 2:16-17
- Gal. 1:3
- Eph. 4:4-6
- 1 Pet. 1:2
- Jude 20-21

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
- B. The Scriptural Evidence of the Three Propositions
- C. The New Testament Passages that link the members of the Trinity.
- D. The Three Persons Work in Harmonious Unity.

D. The Three Persons Work in Harmonious Unity

- Same attributes
 - E.g., Power: Father (1 Pet. 1:5), Son (2 Cor. 12:9), Spirit (Rom. 15:19).
- Same works...
 - Creation: the work of creation is attributed to the Father (Gen. 1:1); Son (Col. 1:16); and Spirit (Job 26:13; Ps. 104:30)
 - Incarnation: by all three (Luke 1:35)

D. The Three Persons Work in Harmonious Unity

- Same works...
 - Atonement: Heb. 9:14 – Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.
 - Resurrection of Christ: Father (Acts 2:32), Son (John 10:17, 18), and Spirit (Rom. 1:4).
 - Salvation: 1 Pet. 1:2
 - Indwelling of the Christian: John 14:15-23

The Trinity Defended

- A. The Intimations of the Old Testament
- B. The Scriptural Evidence of the Three Propositions
- C. The New Testament Passages that link the members of the Trinity.
- D. The Three Persons Work in Harmonious Unity.
- E. The Early Creeds

The Apostles' Creed

- “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; ... I believe in the Holy Ghost.”

The Nicene Creed

- “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (homoousion) with the Father” (Council of Nicea, AD 325.).

The Athanasian Creed

- "We worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity. Neither confounding the persons, nor separating the substance."
 - Assumed to be of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, AD 328-373.
 - But many assign it to a later date and the school of Augustine.

Implications of the Trinity

- Salvation
- Revelation
- Relationship