

1. Definition of the Doctrine of God

A. Existence

Natural arguments

1. **Cosmological Argument** - Every effect must have a cause. The universe could not create itself.
2. **The Teleological Argument** - The apparent purpose, order and design in the universe would necessitate an intelligent Creator (Paley). Examples: human body/Acts 14:15-18
3. **The Anthropological Argument** - The human being is an intelligent, volitional, and emotional being with innate capacity for language, relationship, creativity, and ruling and again with a sense of eternity. These extraordinary personal characteristics reflect a superior personal Creator.
4. **Moral Argument** - Without belief in God, our assumptions of morality, ethics and justice would be without foundation. Man also has a cry for justice, which indicates that man is made in God's image.
5. **The Ontological Argument** - Man has a concept of a Being who is the greatest of all conceivable beings—perfect, holy, loving and just, therefore that Being must exist, or else he would not be perfect.

Biblical arguments

1. Psalms 19:1-4
2. Acts 14:17

B. How has God revealed Himself?

1. Ps 19:1-6
2. John 1:18; 2:11; 5:39

C. Primary Attributes of God

When we speak of God, we should keep in mind that although it is helpful to categorize the attributes of God, all of His attributes work together and in reality should not be thought of in isolation.

- **Eternality** – God stands outside of time while also operating within it and has no beginning or end. (Gen 21:33; Ex. 15:18; Ps 90:2; Isa 40:28)
- **Infinite** – Unlimited and without external constraints. (Ps 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-24)
- **Immanence** – Presence and power is throughout the universe. (Matt 6:25-34; Acts 17:24-28)
- **Immutable** – God's nature does not change. (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8, Jas. 1:17)
- **Omniscient** – God exhaustively knows everything of the past, present and future. (Ps. 147:5; Pr. 15:3; Matt. 10:29-33; Ro. 11:33-36; Heb. 4:13)
- **Omnipotent** – God is the most powerful being in all existence. (Ps. 33:6-12; 62:11,12; Isa. 40:12-26; Jer. 32:17; 27; Eph. 1:19-23; 3:20)
- **Sovereign** – He is the ruler of the universe and nothing is outside of His control. *Sovereignty speaks to God's position, while omnipotence speaks of His power.* (Gen. 50:20; Isa. 46:9-10; Matt. 28:18, 19; Ro. 8:28-32; 9:14-24)
- **Omnipresent** – God is everywhere. (Ps. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-24)
- **Holy** – God is completely righteous and void of anything evil. God is the ultimate measure by which things are considered right and good. (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:13; 1 John 1:5; Rev. 4:8)
- **Just (righteous)** – This describes the way that God deals with man according to His holiness. In receiving sinners, God maintains His holiness through the death of Christ. (Gen. 18:25; Deut. 9:4-6; Isa. 51:5-8; Jer. 9:24)
- **Love** – 1 John 4:10 states it this way, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."
- **True** – God cannot lie, and He always keeps His promises. (Heb. 6:18)
- **Faithful** – God is true to His promises. (Num. 23:19; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; Heb. 6:17-19)
- **Graceful** – Unmerited favor. (John 1:14-16; Eph. 1:3-8; 2:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:13-17; Heb. 4:15-16)
- **Patient** – God withholds judgment and continues to offer salvation over long periods of time. (Ps. 86:15; Ro. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pt. 3:20; 2 Pt. 3:9, 15)

D. Primary Names of God

“A name in Bible times was more than an identification; it was descriptive of its bearer, often revealing some characteristic of a person.”

- **Elohim** – Describes God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.
- **Adonai** – Master, lord, Lord
- **YHWH** – This designates God’s personal name in covenant with creation & Israel.
- **Jehovah** – This is the combination of the names Adonai and YHWH.
- **Kurios** – Greek for Lord.

E. Trinity

Old Testament Evidence of Trinity:

1. **God Is One:** Against the polytheistic religions of that era (Dt 6:4, Isa 42:8, 43:10, 1Ki 18:39).
2. **Composite Oneness.** The common word “one” (960t in OT) means unified one (Ge 2:24 “one flesh”).
3. **Plural Terms.** Plural “we” and “us” (Ge 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, Isa 6:8); some relate this to angels or a divine council.
4. **Divine Agents.** The Spirit of the LORD (Ge 1:2), the Word “...” (1:3; Ps 33:6), Wisdom “...” (Pr 8:22-31), the Angel “...”
5. **God Distinct from God.** Key texts Isa 48:16, 44:6, Zec 12:10, Pss 45:6-7; 110:1.

The Father Is God: Few debate that the Father is God, unlike the Son and the Spirit.

1. **He Is the Father of:** Christ (Mt 3:17; 11:27), Israel (Ex 4:22), angels, (Job 1:6) all believers (Ro 8:14-17), glory (Eph 1:17), light (Jas 1:17), all (Eph 4:6).
2. **Abba** is found only three times in the NT and was used by infants and grown sons to show endearment and respect (Ro 8:15, Gal 4:6).
3. **Functions:** God is the Father (1Co 8:6), the Almighty (Rev 19:6), Maker of heaven and earth (Ge 1:1), Sovereign Ruler (1Ti 6:15), Lord Chief Justice (1Pe 1:17), the Compassionate Reconciler (Jn 3:16).

The Son is God: The *central* belief of Christianity is the deity of Jesus Christ.

1. **Jesus Is God:** (Gospels) John 1:1-3, 18, 8:58 (cf. Ex 3:14), 9:35-37, 10:30, 20:28, Mt 28:19; (Epistles) Acts 10:28, Ro 9:5, Phil 2:5-8, Col 1:14-19, 2:9, Tit 2:13, 2 Pet 1:1, Heb 1:2-13.
2. **Divine Attributes:** Pre-existence (Isa 9:6; Mic 5:2, Jn 1:1, 14, Col 1:16), Omnipresence (Mt 8:27; 18:20), Omnipotence (Mt 28:18), Immutability (Heb 13:8), Sovereignty (Mk 2:5-7; Jn 2:19; 10:17-18)
3. **Divine Titles/Works:** Creator (Jn 1:3, Col 1:16); Sustainer (Heb 1:3); born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit (Isa 7:14, Mt 1:23, Lk 1:35); *Emmanuel*, God with us (Mt 1:23); Son of God/Most High (Mt 14:33; 16:16); Alpha and Omega (Rev 22:13 cf. 1:8; 21:6); Savior, Redeemer; Mighty God (Isa 9:6).
4. **Jesus Is Worshiped:** Ex 20:3-6 makes worship of other gods forbidden; however Jesus is worshiped Mt 2:11, 14:33, 21:14-16, 28:9, 17 Lk 19:38-40, Jn 20:28.
5. **Eternally Begotten Not Made:** *Firstborn*, used 8t in NT, 6t of Christ (Lk 2:7, Ro 8:29, Col 1:15, 18, Heb 1:6 Rev 1:5) indicates either one firstborn and/or the primary heir with legal rights—not necessarily someone born first (Dt 21:16).

The Holy Spirit Is God: At first glance, many struggle with the deity of the HS.

1. **The Spirit Is God:** Mt 28:19; Ac 5:3,4,9; 2Co 3:17-18.
2. **On Par with the Father and the Son:** Seen in relationship with the Father and the Son (Mt 28:19; 1Co 12:4-6; 2Co 13:14; Eph 4:4-6; 1Pe 1:2 cf. also 2Sam 23:2; Isa 40:13-18).
3. **The Holy Spirit Is a Distinct Person**
 - Intelligence: Jn 14:26; 15:26; Ro 8:27; 1Co 2:10-13
 - Demonstrating His Will: Ac 8:29; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 1Co 12:11
 - Manifesting Emotion: Isa 63:10; Eph 4:30; Heb 10:29
 - Advocating in our Relationship to God: Jn 14:26 Ro 8:26

- Blasphemy of the Spirit Is Worse than that of the Father or Son: Mt 12:31

4. Divine Attributes: John Calvin “All the specific attributes of God are attributed to Him [the Spirit] as also to the Son.” Omniscience (Isa 40:13; 1Co 2:10), omnipotence (Isa 40:13-17), omnipresent (Ps 139:7-9; 1Co 2:10-11); holiness (Eph 4:30), etc.

5. Divine Works/Titles: Jesus’ conception from HS (Mt 1:20, Lk1:35); creation of the universe (Ge 1:2; Isa 40:12; Ps 33:6); inspiration of Scripture (2Ti 3:16, 2Pe 1:20). The Spirit ministers to Christians, regenerating (Jn 3:5-7), baptizing (1Co 12:13), sealing (Eph 4:30), indwelling (1Co 6:19), and filling (Eph 5:18), comforts us (Ac 9:31), intercedes for us (Ro 8:26), gives us spiritual gifts and fruit, and will resurrect us (Ro 8:11).

Synthesis: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Are God.

Striving to understand who this triune God is remains extremely important: three persons who are eternally and completely God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, yet these three are not three Gods but one God.

Examples:

- Creation is from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit
- Prayer is to the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit

Examples of the Distinct Office and Activities:

- The Father is presented as electing, loving, and bestowing. The Son is presented as suffering, redeeming, and upholding the universe. The Holy Spirit is presented as regenerating, indwelling, baptizing, energizing, and sanctifying.

2. Discernment

- Major Issues – Attributes, Deity of the Father/Son/Holy Spirit, and the Trinity
- Minor Issues – How the Father elects and how specific the sovereignty of God operates.

3. Summary

We believe that creation and the Bible reveal God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the Triune God of the Bible. We believe that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are equally God, while acknowledging a hierarchy, just as we see in His creation, equally eternal, faithful, and just. All of the divine attributes and functions work together to describe, in inadequate human terms, the triune God. Yet, we acknowledge, as did Augustine, “We are speaking of God, what marvel if thou do not comprehend? For if thou comprehend, He is not God.” The trinity and the attributes of God, among other issues, are non-negotiable major issues in the doctrine of God. Yet, there are other issues such as how election works and how specific the sovereignty of God is that are minor in comparison. When we speak of Christian theology, we as Christians believe that God’s desire is for His children to have a heart and action change when we study Him.

4. Application

How should this affect:

- Individual Christians
 - What about in bad/good times?
 - How should our lives and character change?
 - Does the trinity have any bearing on the family?
- The Church
- Evangelism/Discipleship