

# THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

## Table of Contents

<b><i>INTRODUCTION: THE BEING OF GOD</i></b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b><i>MANKIND IS SINFUL</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b><i>MAN IS A RELIGIOUS BEING</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b><i>LESSON I: THE NATURE OF GOD or GOD'S MODE OF BEING</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1. GOD IS A PERSONAL BEING</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2. GOD IS A SPIRIT BEING</b> .....	<b>7</b>
PROOFS:.....	7
COMMON OBJECTION: .....	8
<b>3. GOD IS A TRIUNE BEING</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><i>THE TRIUNITY: A REVEALED DOCTRINE</i></b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>THE TRIUNITY REFLECTED IN CREATION</b> .....	<b>10</b>

# THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

## INTRODUCTION: THE BEING OF GOD

The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God but presumes God's existence so you and I should do the same. This study has no intention of making labored and elaborate arguments for the existence of God. Let's start where the Bible starts. There are so many witnesses to His existence that the Bible makes no effort to prove it.

God's eternal power and Deity are clearly seen in the visible things He has created. This is called [Natural Revelation](#) or the witness in nature.

Psalms 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

The voice of these witnesses of nature have been heard in every language, culture and secret places of the earth. While it is true that in times past God did not directly reveal Himself to the peoples of the earth, He left for Himself a clear and present witness of Himself.

Acts 14:16-17

16 "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 "Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

There is also the innate witness of the human conscience.

Romans 2:14-15

14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,

15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

Natural creation and the human conscience (spirit) loudly proclaim the existence of the One True, living and eternal God. The atheist as well as the child must admit an uneasy or apprehensive feeling for lying, stealing or fighting. This feeling is the testimony of conscience, written upon the hearts of men everywhere telling them there is a God, a Lawgiver, to whom he must give account. Making amends, reparations, sacrifices and other such human tendencies are examples of what man will do to placate an offended

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

Diety. Every man has felt the presence of God, even those whose conscience has later become seared through sin or otherwise tampered with. The atheist is the educated fool according to God. There are no theoretical atheists among the pagans nor are there any atheists among the demons...

James 2:19

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe-- and tremble!

God does not reason with the atheist, He reproveth him.

Psalms 14:1

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.

The error is not so much in the understanding as in the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9-10

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

The theoretical atheist (the man who denies the existence of God) tampers with the mind until it agrees with his heart. It is a case of wishful thinking dominating rational thought. Thankfully there are not many theoretical atheists among us. However, every man in his natural and fallen state is a practical atheist in that he does not want to know or be bound by the true living God.

Psalms 14:1 and 53:1

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.

## MANKIND IS SINFUL

The fool represents every unregenerate man. Sin originated in the lustful desires, and the darkened heart (understanding) is one of the effects by way of Divine punishment.

Romans 1:21-32

21 because, **although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God**, nor were thankful, but became **futile in their thoughts**, and their **foolish hearts were darkened**.

22 Professing to be wise, they **became fools**,

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also **gave them up to uncleanness**, in the **lusts** of their

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

- 25 hearts, to **dishonor** their bodies among themselves,  
25 who **exchanged the truth of God for the lie**, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
- 26 For this reason **God gave them up to vile passions**. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.
- 27 Likewise also the **men, leaving the natural use of the woman**, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is **shameful**, and receiving in themselves the **penalty** of their error which was due.
- 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over to a debased mind**, to do those things which are not fitting;
- 29 being filled with all **unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness**; full of **envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness**; they are whisperers,
- 30 **backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters**, inventors of **evil** things, **disobedient** to parents,
- 31 **undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful**;
- 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are **worthy of death**, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

True human development morally takes sin into account, and is the unfolding of a human nature that hates the true God. It is moral bankruptcy decay.

Rom 1:18-20

- 18 For the **wrath of God is revealed** from heaven against all **ungodliness and unrighteousness** of men, who **suppress the truth** in unrighteousness,
- 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.
- 20 For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes are clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are made, even **His eternal power and Godhead**, so that **they are without excuse**,

First, men suppressed or held down the truth about God. They had the truth about God in the book of nature. His eternal power and Deity were clearly revealed in the things He had made, but men did not like this truth. They turned away from revelation and turned aside to their own reasoning. Second, they changed the truth about God into a lie, and made images or representations of God in the form of man and birds and beasts and creeping things. There was the Apollo of the Greeks, the eagle of the Romans, the bull of the Egyptians, and the serpent of the Assyrians. Men knew God and refused to worship Him, and idolatry followed as a psychological necessity. And third, idolatry was followed by sensuality. God gave them up to uncleanness and vile affections. He withdrew His restraining grace and suffered human nature to go its full length in immorality. The closing verses of Romans one reveal the terrible things men and women will do when given up by God. They not only do these things themselves, but are glad to see others do them. The lowest stage in depravity is reached when men take pleasure in seeing others sin.

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

### MAN IS A RELIGIOUS BEING

Man is by nature a religious being. By training, apart from Bible teaching and the new birth, he will either become an atheist or an idolater. This is the best education can do apart from the grace of God. A mere cultural religion deifies humanity, denies the fall, and talks only of upward development. This is the religion of the evolutionist. The god of the sensualist is his belly, his inward desires. The only law he recognizes is the craving of a depraved nature.

Phil 3:18-19

- 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:  
19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things.

This is the religion of the godless business man as well as of the drunkard and licentious. It is as bad to invent a god in the imagination as it is to make one with the hands. The old form of idolatry had its gods made with hands; the new form of idolatry has its gods spun out of the imagination and harbored in the mind. The unknown God is still the true God.

Acts 17:22-33

- 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;  
23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:  
24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.  
25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.  
26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,  
27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;  
28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'  
29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.  
30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,  
31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

- assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."
- 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."
- 33 So Paul departed from among them.

It is the purpose of the following pages to present the God of Scripture in His nature and personal perfections. The reader is asked to test what is written here with what is revealed in the Holy Bible. May the Spirit of truth guide and keep us into the truth!

### LESSON I: THE NATURE OF GOD or GOD'S MODE OF BEING

What is God? What constitutes the Divine nature? What is God's mode of being? These questions bring us to the burning bush and upon holy ground. We must tread softly, walk humbly, and avoid speculation ... but, we can go as far as Divine revelation goes.

**There is a Divine nature.** By nature we mean that particular character of being which makes one kind of being differ from another kind of being. Thus we speak of angelic nature, of human nature, and of brute nature. The nature that may be predicated of God is suggested by Paul who says that the Galatians, before their conversion, served those which by nature were no gods.

Gal 4:8

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

This clearly implies that one does exist who by nature is God.

#### 1. GOD IS A PERSONAL BEING

As a person, God is distinguished from *pantheism*, the belief that all things in the aggregate are God, God is everything and everything is God. God as a personal Being is both *immanent* (inborn or innate in humanity) and *transcendent*, (supreme, ultimate). He is both in and above His creation. He is a person in His creation, but separate and distinct from it. He is also above His creation, that is, He is bigger than creation, distinct from it and not a part of it. In his prayer dedicating the temple, Solomon paid tribute to the transcendent greatness of God with these words:

1 Kings 8:27

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!

The marks of personality and being belong to God and also to us as bearers of His image:

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

Gen 1:27

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

### 2. GOD IS A SPIRIT BEING

God is *exclusively* Spirit:

John 4:24

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The reader must grasp this truth firmly, or he will have trouble in understanding the Triune Godhead. As Spirit, God can neither be divided nor compounded for He is invisible and intangible.

John 1:18

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

### PROOFS:

1. God is creator of spirits, and since a spirit being is the highest order of being, He must have the nature that belongs to that order.

Heb 12:9

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

2. The scriptures ascribe spirituality to God. (John 4:24 above)
3. His spirituality may be argued from His immensity and eternity. He is infinite as to space and time. Matter is limited as to space and time, but God is both *omnipresent* (everywhere) and *eternal* (infinite, perpetual.)
4. His spirituality may be argued from his independency and immutability, (tenacity, perseverance, constancy) That which is material can be divided, added to, or diminished. Matter is subject to change, but God is the unchangeable one.

Mal 3:6

"For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

5. His spirituality may also be argued from His absolute perfections. A material body imposes limitations, and is not consistent with absolute perfection. We use

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

the word perfection in a wider sense than sinlessness. The Savior, in his human body, had his limitations although He was sinless. He was not everywhere at the same time. He was not immune to hunger and thirst, weariness and pain.

### COMMON OBJECTION:

Many passages of scripture ascribe bodily parts to God. They speak of His eyes, face, hands, feet, arms, etc. In reply it may be said that the language is figurative, and is used in an accommodation to human understanding. Such language is called *anthropomorphism*, the ascription of human characteristics to things not human.

### 3. GOD IS A TRIUNE BEING

There is one Divine essence of being subsisting in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is Triune: three in one. In the early part of the fourth century when Arianism threatened to prevail, a young theologian named Athanasius formulated the statement that was incorporated in the Nicene Creed. He said, "We worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." This is a remarkable statement, profound in its clarity and simplicity. The Arian notion made the Father the Supreme God and the Son only Divine in a subordinate sense. The Son was like but not of the same substance with the Father, according to Arius.

The Sabellian notion is that God is one person, manifesting Himself sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit. But this would make Him cease to exist as Father when manifested as Son.

If God were a physical being as a Trinity, He would be in three parts, and if these parts were persons, each person would be only a part of God. But as a Spirit He is three persons, but only one substance, and each person is all of God. Of the Son we read:

Col 2:9

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

And again He is called:

Col 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

God is not three persons in the same sense that Father, mother, and daughter are three persons in one family. It could not be said of any one of three persons in a human family that he is all of the family.

God has three modes of Being, three centers of personal consciousness. He is one essentially, but three persons relatively and in these relations He exists as Father, Son,

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

and Holy Spirit. In the matter of source, origin, and authority, He is the Father. In the matter of expression, medium, and revelation, He is the Son. In the matter of apprehension, accomplishment, and realization, He is the Spirit. The characteristic differences between the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit may be summarized in four statements, as follows:

1. All outgoing seems to be the work of Christ; all return to God the work of the Spirit.
2. Christ is the organ of external revelation; the Holy Spirit is the organ of internal revelation.
3. Christ is our advocate in heaven; the Holy Spirit is our advocate in the soul.
4. In the work of Christ we are passive; in the work of the Holy Spirit we are made active.

## THE TRIUNITY: A REVEALED DOCTRINE

Man will know of the existence of God in nature and natural revelation, but man without the Bible can never *discover* the one true God, for without the Bible's revelation of God man cannot discover the Triune persons in the Godhead. The Trinity of God is simply indiscoverable by human reason, nor is there any rational proof of it.

It is said that on one occasion Daniel Webster and a friend listened to a sermon upon the Trinity. As they walked home from church the friend said: "Mr. Webster is not that doctrine a mathematical impossibility?" to which Mr. Webster replied, "According to the mathematics of earth it seems to be; but I'm not acquainted with the mathematics of heaven."

The Bible gives us heavenly mathematics, and to it we should go in proof of the Triunity of God.

1. We have Triunity in the plural names of God. The first name of God we meet with in the Bible is plural: "In the beginning God (*Elohim*, plural) created (singular) the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The plural noun with the singular verb shows Trinity acting in unity. Some have argued that the Bible begins with a forgery; that this first verse should read: "In the beginning the gods." Not so; the singular verb shows there was One Being acting, while the plural noun reveals three persons in one Divine essence. The plural for God occurs far more often than does the singular.
2. We have Triunity in the plural expressions used by God when speaking of Himself.

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

Gen 1:26

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our Likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Gen 11:7

"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

3. A trinity of Divine persons was manifested at the baptism of Jesus. There was the incarnate Son being baptized; the Father was manifested by audible voice; and the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.

Matt 3:16-17

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

4. We have Triunity in the baptismal formula:

Matt 28:19

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

It does not say, "baptizing them in the names (plural) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Nor does it give us the equivalent of the plural by saying, "In the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Ghost." Nor, on the other hand, does it say, "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as if the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost might be taken as merely three designations of one person. Here is the reading: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

### ***THE TRIUNITY REFLECTED IN CREATION***

While there is nothing in creation to explain or account for the Triunity of God, the Triune does explain creation. This is a tri-universe, a three-in-one creation. One of the truly great books of our day is that book by Nathan R. Wood entitled "The Secret of the Universe." In this remarkable book the author shows that the universe is what it is because it was created by the Triune God. He first shows that the physical or outer universe is a triunity. The basic things are space, matter, time; three modes of existence and, like God, each are the entire whole. And each of these basic things is a triunity. Space has three dimensions: length, breadth, and height. Each is the whole of

## THEOLOGY 101: THE NATURE OF GOD

space and yet there are three distinct dimensions. Matter is composed of three things: energy, motion, phenomena; three modes of existence; distinct and yet one and each is the entire whole. And as a time universe there is absolute triune: past, present, and future; distinct and yet each is the whole. All of time is or has been future, the future includes it all. All of time is or has been or will be present. And all of time is or will be past.

The author then takes the soul or what he calls the inner universe, and shows that the soul of man is triune, that is, three modes of existence. He calls them nature, person, personality; distinct and yet each is the whole of the soul, absolute triune and absolute oneness. And here the author shows how man as a soul reflects the Triune God in a way that the physical creation does not. He makes God the key that unlocks the riddle of the universe. He says in a sort of summary: "The structure of the universe, the nature of space, of matter, of time, of human life, attests the Trinity. They reflect the Trinity. They demand the Trinity. The Trinity explains them."