

# ***The Doctrine of God***

by

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## **Essence**

### ***Definition of Essence***

- ***General Definition:*** The essence of a thing or person is the substance or substances of which the thing consists. The essence of a thing or being may consist of either one or many components. Each component may have one or many characteristics.
- ***Theological Definition:*** By the essence of God we mean that one, self-existent, immense, simple spirit of which God consists.

### ***Discussion of the Essence***

- God's essence consists of "spirit stuff." John 4:24.
- The various biblical descriptions of God's essence are not attributes, but "characteristics of the essence." God's essence, unlike man's, consists of one component, "spirit stuff," which has several characteristics. Since God's essence exists and is alive, God is a being.

## **Characteristics of the Essence**

### ***Spirit (that "stuff" of which God consists) – John 4:24***

#### ***Definition of Spirit***

- A spirit is a real, incorporeal, immaterial being.

#### ***Discussion of Spirit***

- When we say that God is "spirit" we mean that God's essence is real, incorporeal, immaterial substance in which God's attributes inhere and the Persons subsist. In other words, God's essence consists of "spirit stuff." In John 4:24, The word "spirit" is "anarthrous," indicating quality. God is as to His essential quality, spirit.
- Taken together, Luke 24:36-40 and Ephesians 6:12, indicate that a spirit does not have flesh, bones, nor blood.

### ***Oneness – John 10:30***

#### ***Definition of Oneness***

- God is one because the three persons share equally in only one essence. Oneness speaks to the "aloneness" of God.

#### ***Discussion of Oneness – John 10:30***

- How Many Essences are there? John 10:30 indicates that only ONE spirit makes up the triune God. Christ and the Father are one thing, not one person. Note the NEUTER GENDER of the number ONE.
- Unity of essence is related to oneness of essence in that unity expresses the fact that the essence is made up of only one thing (see simplicity below) while oneness indicates that there is only one essence, and therefore only one genuine God.

### ***Self-existence***

#### ***Definition of Self-existence***

- By self existence we mean that the essence (spirit stuff) of which God consists exists without cause. God is the "uncaused cause" of all things. No act of will caused God to exist.

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## ***Discussion of Self Existence***

- Exodus 3:14 - God is what He is.
- John 5:26 - God is “continually having” life. Note the present tense verb. God has life “in the sphere of Himself” This “essential life” is expressed in the decree in the Father and is produced through the Son in the transference of eternal life to the believer (John 5:24) and in the resurrection of the dead (John 5:21-29).

## ***Immensity***

### ***Definition of Immensity - 1 Kings 8:27***

- By immensity we mean that God’s essence is not containable. Immensity is not to be confused with omnipresence, which will be discussed below.

### ***Discussion of Immensity - Isaiah 66:1-2***

- God is *not* bigger than His creation. It is more accurate to say that the Creator is apart from, or distinguished from, His creation, and therefore not contained within it. God’s essence is incomparable in size to His creation because only created things have size.

### ***Distinctions concerning God’s Immensity - Psalm 139:7-10***

- “Omnipresence” is not an attribute or characteristic of the essence. “Omnipresence” relates God’s essence to His creation. God, as regards His creation, is present everywhere. Since the creation is not eternal, God’s omnipresence is not eternal. Therefore, omnipresence is not an attribute, or characteristic of the essence which must be eternal.

## ***Simplicity***

### ***Definition of Simplicity***

- God’s essence will never change. God’s essence is spirit only, and will never be anything else: John 4:24  
By simplicity we mean that God’s essence is singular in substance. It is spirit alone, unmixed with any other element.

### ***Distinctions concerning Simplicity***

- Several persons equally share in one essence: John 10:30. The one essence consists of only one substance: James 2:19. Simplicity is related to oneness in that oneness tells us that there is only one essence, and simplicity says that one essence consists of only one substance (unity).
- Is there only one Yahweh, or is Yahweh only one thing? The correct translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 is “Hear Israel, Yahweh our God is one Yahweh.”
- The word “one” (Hebrew = *echad*) indicates not “aloneness of being,” but “unity of essence.” The Hebrew word “*levado*,” meaning “one” in the sense of only or alone, is not used here. This verse indicates not that there is only one God (which is true), but that Yahweh is one thing, or one unified essence. Correctly understood, Deuteronomy 6:4 teaches the simplicity of the essence (see simplicity below) rather than the traditional view that it teaches monotheism, or aloneness (oneness) of being. While both monotheism (oneness or aloneness of being) and simplicity of the essence are taught in Scripture, simplicity is often overlooked in Bible teaching.