

## **God**

### **Article II**

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

**Key Text:** None. Key texts are only placed after the three sub-heading on: A. God the Father; B. God the Son; and C. God the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, the 1925 contained only an article on God. There were no sub-headings.

#### **Major Theological Observation: A Brief Commentary**

When we think about God, two important questions naturally arise. First, does God exist? Second, what is God like? The chart on “Theology Proper” provides a helpful summary of these 2 questions.

Americans have been pretty consistent for some time when answering the first question. Atheism continues to bark loudly, but still it has not garnered all that many followers. Ninety-five percent of Americans believe God exists. The “New Atheists” are not succeeding.

However, when we examine the second question, things become more complicated and confusing. Pluralism is the “in-thing” in contemporary culture, and the doctrine of God has not escaped its influence. Choices today include pantheism, finite theism, deism, polytheism (e.g. Hinduism, Mormonism and varieties of New Ageism) and classis monotheism, just to name a few. Note the accompanying chart and summary on “Seven Major Views of God.”

A veritable smorgasbord of options is available. “Step up to the plate and choose your god, gods or goddesses...”

Couple this with the present infatuation with tolerance and the democratization of truth, and the “God question” becomes problematic, if not insolvable.

It is at this point that Christianity must choose to swim against the currents of modernity. While recognizing different religions may share some common beliefs and values, basic and fundamental differences divide us when addressing some important issues. The nature of God is one.

### **Specific Theological Observations From Article Two**

- 1) **The Baptist Faith and Message article affirms “there is one and only one living and true God.”** This cancels out atheism and polytheism.
- 2) **This God is “intelligent, spiritual and personal. He is Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler.”** This rules out pantheism, panentheism and deism.
- 3) **Our God is “infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing.”** God has no beginning or end. He lacks nothing. He is perfect and pure with no taint of sin or evil. He is omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing).  
 “His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present and future, including the future decisions of his free creatures.” This sets aside finite and open theism.
- 4) **The Bible reveals a God who rightly deserves our love and obedience.** To give such devotion to any other person or any other thing is to commit idolatry and violate the First Commandment (Ex. 20:3).

- 5) **Our God is also utterly unique from the theological conceptions of all other religions, for the Bible reveals him to be a Trinity of three eternal persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and yet still one – a unity.** Indeed the biblical witness is clear: whatever it is that constitutes God as God, the Father is all of this, the Son is all of this and the Holy Spirit is all of this. But, there is still only one God, distinct in person “but without division of nature, essence or being.”
- 6) **The Christian God is personal and more (a tri-unity).** In other world religions like Buddhism, God is less than personal. Islam views God as utterly transcendent and basically unapproachable. Mysticism and its New Age offspring see God as wholly immanent. The Bible says the one true God is both (transcendent and immanent). He is above us and separate from us, and yet he is also a God who can be known, truly and genuinely known, in a personal relationship.

### **An Important Practical Consideration**

What is the relevance of our theology of God? Does our thinking about and answer to the God question really make any difference in the day-to-day experience of life? I believe the answer is a resounding yes.

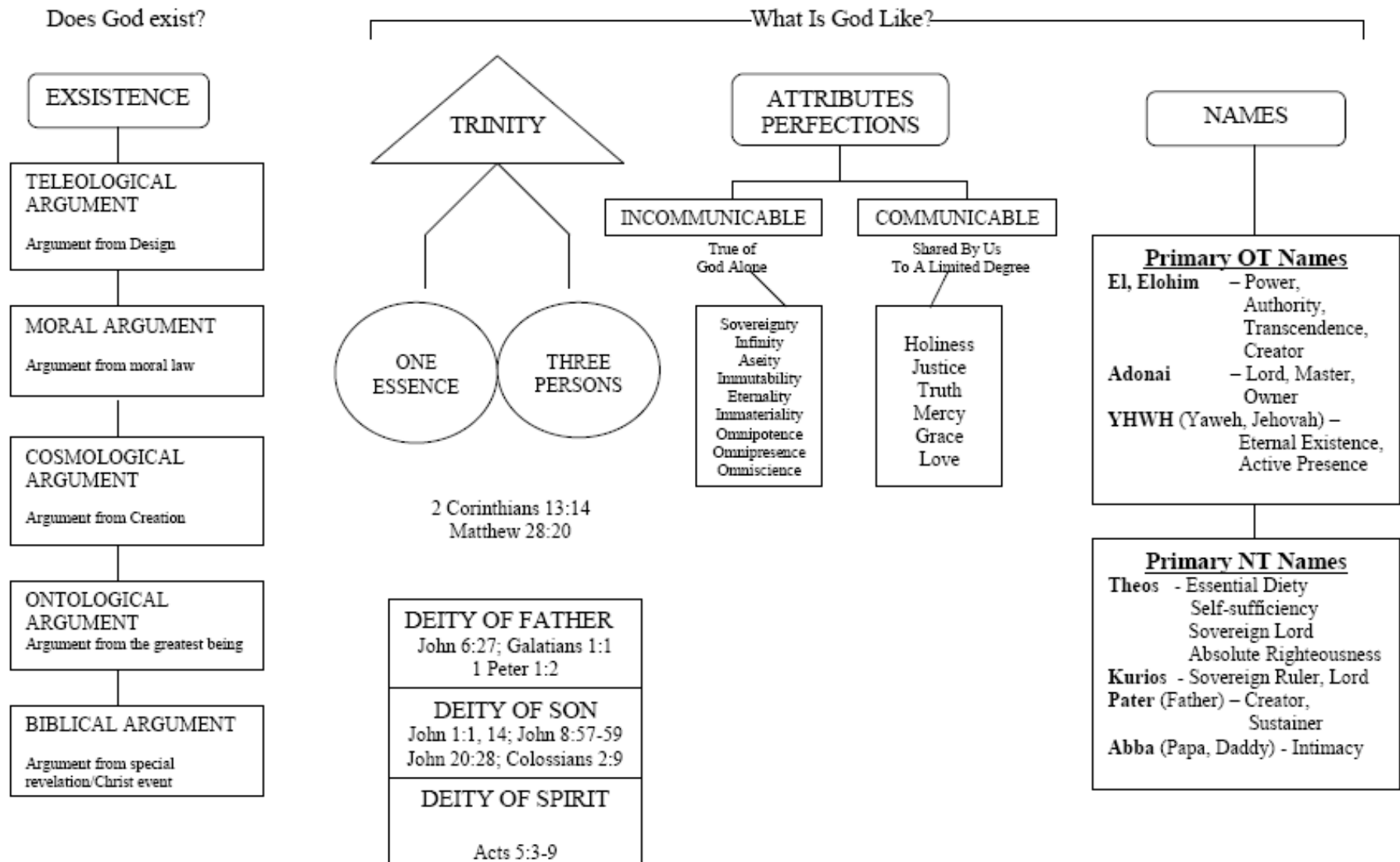
Ivan, in Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s novel, *The Brothers Karamozov*, got it exactly right – “if God is dead, everything is permissible.” To this we can add, “if we are all gods, then anything goes, for by definition God (or gods) makes the rules.

Ultimately in this kind of world, there are no rules, no norms, no standard by which we can consistently measure truth from error, right from wrong. We do not live in a world where people believe nothing. We find ourselves drowning in a world that believes everything.

Genesis 1:1 teaches us, “In the beginning God...” Southern Baptists speak with one voice in giving affirmation to this proposition and all others in Holy Scripture that reveal to us real and “true truth” (to cite Francis Schaeffer) about the God who has created us in his image, redeemed us through his Son and made us spiritually alive by his Spirit.

God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

# Theology Proper



# Seven Major Views of God

**Atheism: A World Without God**



**Theism: A World Plus an Infinite God**



**Pantheism: A World That Is God**



**Deism: A World On Its Own Made by God**



**Finite Theism: A World With a Finite God**



**Panentheism: A World In God**



**Polytheism: A World With Many Gods**

