The Doctrine Of The Divine Essence

Definition

The English word essence is derived from the Greek adjective *ousia*, “being, substance.” Essence means “inner nature, true substance, a person’s qualities or attributes.” Some of these qualities of a person are visible and some are invisible. Essence implies being or existence. God exists and there are certain qualities or attributes, which belong to His essence. God in His grace has revealed Himself, and His essence. God’s essence must be revealed in order to be understood. God reveals His essence through the Word of God, Bible Doctrine. The believer must learn and apply the doctrines, which pertain to His divine essence in order to understand who and what God is and to orient to His will, purpose and plan for his life. Since, God is spirit; His attributes are invisible to the human eye. His qualities cannot be perceived through experience (empiricism) or by human intellect (rationalism). His invisible attributes can only be understood through the non-meritorious system of perception, which we call faith. The believer is totally dependent upon Bible Doctrine to understand the invisible, immaterial, infinite, unlimited essence of God. The essence of God is unseen and totally beyond what the human mind can handle.

Vocabulary

- *Ousia* (adjective), “being, substance.”
- *Morphe* (noun), “essence, nature, attributes of something or someone.”
- *Eidos* (noun), “nature, class, kind.”
- *Schema* (noun), “disposition, character, figure, shape appearance.”

Documentation

- Sovereignty (Father: Matt. 6:10; Eph. 1:11; Son: Matt. 28:18; John 5:21; Spirit: 1 Cor. 12:11)
- Righteousness (Father: John 17:25; Son: 1 John 2:1; Spirit: Psa. 51:11)
- Justice (Father: Psa. 89:14; Rom. 3:24-26; Son: 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 3:18; Spirit: Neh. 9:20a; John 16:8-11)
- Love (Father: John 3:16; Son: Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16a; Spirit: Rom. 5:5; 15:30)
• Eternal life (Father: John 1:1; 5:26; Son: John 1:1; 1 John 5:11; Spirit: Heb. 9:14)
• Omnipotence (Father: Mark 14:36 and Luke 1:37; Son: Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3; Spirit: Rom. 15:13)
• Omniscience (Father: Matt. 6:8; Son: John 2:25; 18:4; Spirit: Isa. 11:2)
• Omnipresence (Father: Eph. 4:6; Son: Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Spirit: Psa. 139:7)
• Immutability (Father: Heb. 6:17; Jam. 1:17; Son: Heb. 13:8; Spirit: John 14:16; 1 John 5:7)
• Veracity (Father: John 7:28; Son: John 1:14; 14:6; Spirit: John 14:17; 1 John 5:7)

Essence and the Trinity

The Bible clearly teaches that God is 3 co-equal, co-infinite and co-eternal Persons (Gen. 1:26; Isa. 6:3, 8; 48:16; John 10:30 cf. Psa. 110:1; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2). The Scriptures say that God is “one” when emphasizing His essence. The word “one” is a descriptive adjective meaning one in essence. The Scriptures teach that God is 3 co-equal, co-infinite and co-eternal Persons with the same identical essence or attributes: (1) God the Father (1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:3) (2) God the Son (John 10:30; 14:9; Col. 2:9) (3) God the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2; Ex. 31:3; Isa. 6:8, 9; cf. Acts 28:25-26; Jer. 31:31-34 cf. Heb. 10:15-17). God is one in essence, three in Person. The oneness of God is called His glory. His glory or oneness is His essence or character (John 10:30). All the invisible attributes of God are always present in Him, but not all are revealed to man at the same time.

God’s Personality

The Trinity is one in essence but three in personality: (1) God the Father (2) God the Son (3) God the Holy Spirit. We understand the personality of God from the Scriptures which reveal the manifestations of His attributes. God: (1) Designs (2) Executes (3) Empowers. These are all activates of His personality: (1) God the Father designs (2) God the Son executes. (3) God the Holy Spirit empowers. When God speaks of Himself with the first person personal pronoun “I,” He is revealing to us that He is conscious of Himself and eternally Himself.

God: (1) Thinks (2) Makes decisions (3) Feels. God has attributes, but God is a personality. God is not a thing or a force. God knows that He is beyond comparison. He has absolute self-respect. God the Father totally respects and loves God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christ totally respects and loves God the
Father and God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit totally respects and loves God the Father and God the Son. Each one has complete self-confidence and loves them self. This is not arrogance because His perfect personality is beyond our imperfection. If we have total love for self that is arrogance. If God has total love for Himself, it is perfection. If God did not love Himself, there would be no reason for us to love Him. When we learn doctrine and share His thinking, we come to share His own high opinion of Himself.

The Attributes of God

The qualities and perfections of God are termed attributes. Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His (God’s) invisible attributes, His eternal power (divine omnipotence) and deity, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made (the act of creation is a function of God as a Person).” Essence is the Being which is attributed to God since the characteristics of His essence are eternal and inherently in Him. The grace of God and the work of God are manifestations of His attributes. To understand Who and What God is, you must understand His invisible attributes. To understand His invisible attributes, you must learn the Word of God. Jesus Christ manifested God to man (John 1:18). To understand the Lord Jesus Christ, we must understand His divine essence. We belong to Jesus Christ after salvation; He purchased us out of the slave market of sin. We are designed to understand the thoughts and functions of God. Man’s finite mind comes into contact with the infinite.

There are 2 categories of divine attributes: (1) Absolute (2) Relative. God’s absolute attributes are those attributes which are outside of man’s frame of reference. His absolute attributes belong to the nature of God apart from His connection with the creation. God’s absolute attributes cannot be comprehended. His relative attributes can be understood. They are related to our frame of reference. His relative attributes are related to things in our frame of reference such as: (1) Time (2) Space (3) Creation (4) Moral beings. God is absolute and man is relative. God transcends time, space, creation and moral beings. Man is confined to time.

The Absolute Attributes of God

God is spirit. The universe is composed of material and immaterial. Matter is material, you and I are material. God is immaterial. You can’t touch God, but you can touch man. God is a Spirit (John 4:24). Therefore, God is invisible. The Creator of the universe is immaterial or invisible. Because God is a Spirit, God is
life (Jer. 10:10; John 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:19). God lives because He has life. God has
does not have life as we do. He has eternal life. Eternal life has no beginning or
end. God has always existed. God will always exist as He does now in the present.
The life of the unbeliever is everlasting life, while the life of the believer is eternal
life which is received at the moment of personal faith in Jesus Christ. God gives us
eternal life at the moment we believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, 18, 36; 10:10;
14:6; 20:31; 1 John 5:11-12). Jesus Christ is eternal life (John 14:6). He has
always existed. Jesus Christ as the Creator is the Source of all life (Heb. 1:2). God
the Father is also the Source of life because He breathes the spark of life into the
fetus when it comes from the mother’s womb at birth. God the Holy Spirit is the
Source of life at regeneration and as the One who places every Church Age
believer into union with Christ at the moment of faith in Christ. Spirituality also
means personality for anyone who has life has a personality. God’s personality
never changes.

God is infinite. Infinite means without boundaries or limitations. God is not
limited to time and space as we are. Infinity characterizes not only what God is but
also all that God does: (1) his holiness or integrity (2) His love (3) His veracity (4)
His Word of truth. All His characteristics require energy and God’s energy is
infinite.

Infinity has 3 characteristics: (1) Self-Existence: (a) God exists eternally (Ex.
3:14). (b) He is unsustained by Himself or by any other source. (c) God doesn’t
need anyone’s help but we need help from Him. (d) He is the infinite Source with
infinite capacity. (e) God’s existence cannot be changed. (f) All things exist
because of God. (g) God causes all things to exist. (h) No one causes God to
exist.

God never changes. He cannot change (Psa. 33:11; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James
1:17). God cannot get better or worse than His perfect essence. He is
unchangeably perfect. His immutability means that He cannot change His own
nature.

God is a union of 3 co-equal, co-infinite and co-eternal Persons. Unity means
that God is consistent. It does not mean that there is 1 Person in the Godhead. The
Trinity is 3 Persons, one essence. Unity means that each Person of the Trinity is
consistent with Himself and with the other Two. Unity means that God the Father,
God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are a perfect team.

God is Perfection. God’s intellect, affections and character are perfect. His
perfection involves absolute truth, love and integrity. He is Truth (Psa. 25:5; John
17:17; 1 John 5:6). God never lies to us or Himself. God’s Word is perfect
absolute truth (Deut. 32:4; 1 John 5:20; John 6:32; Heb. 8:2). God is Love (1 John
4:7, 16). God’s love does contain emotion. God’s love does not require an object.
The Bible sometimes ascribes human love to God in order to help us understand God’s viewpoint on a particular subject. God loves us because of Who and What He is and not because of who we are. We are not worthy of God’s perfect love because we are sinners. God loves His own righteousness with an infinite love. We receive God’s righteousness at the moment of salvation (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). God can now love us with His infinite love because there is now something in us that is worthy of His perfect love, which is His perfect righteousness.

God is Integrity or holiness (Lev. 11:44-45; Deut. 32:4; 1 John 2:29). God’s integrity is composed of His righteousness, justice and love. He has had absolute righteousness and justice from all eternity past (Ex. 15:11; 19:10-16; Isa. 6:3). God has perfect integrity. God’s holiness is maintained by His sovereign will. God’s integrity is His unchangeable Self.

The Relative Attributes of God

The Attributes of God related to time and space. Eternity is an attribute of God related to time. God has always existed and will always exist. He is the Cause and Origin of time, He is not subject to time like human beings (Deut. 32:40; Psa. 90:2; 102:27; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:17). God invented time for us and not Himself. Time is the way God manifests eternity to us. We adjust to eternal God by possessing eternal life. We think in terms of time and we cannot live without time. God has always lived without needing time and will always live not needing time. God is not time, but time is in God. Think of a big circle as representing eternity and time is like a dot inside the circle. Eternity is infinity in relation to time. This means that our concept of time is based upon eternity.

God is immense. Immensity is an attribute of God related to space. God is not subject to the laws of space. He invented space for us to exist in. God created space for us. Space is large, but not as large as God. God put order into space. The billions and billions of planets, stars, suns, moons, galaxies do not collide with each other because God has order in the universe. God is outside of space. God does not need space for there is no space to contain Him. Since, God is infinity and has no boundaries or limitations, it is impossible for God to need space for it is too small for Him. God is omnipresent. Omnipresence describes space in relation to God. Immensity describes God in relation to space. God is BIG.

God has attributes that are related to Creation. One of which is omnipresence (Deut. 4:39; Psa. 139:8; Prov. 15:3; Acts 17:27). God is everywhere present. God fills the entire universe and everything beyond the universe to infinity (Psa. 139:7; Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:27). Because He is everywhere present means that God knows our problems because He is there when we are having them.
God is omniscient. (Psa. 33:13-15; 139:1-4; 147:4-5; Prov. 15:3; Isa. 36:9-10; 44:28; Mal. 3:16; Matt. 6:8; 10:29-30; Acts 15:8; Heb. 4:3, 13; 1 John 3:20). Omniscience can be characterized in 3 ways: (1) Eternal: God has always known everything (Acts 15:18). (2) Incomprehensible: Our brains can’t comprehend the omniscience of God (Rom. 11:33). (3) Wise: God has perfect wisdom because He has all knowledge (Eph. 3:10). You cannot surprise God with anything because God always knew about it from eternity past. God’s knowledge is total and perfect.

God is omnipotent (Isa. 44:24; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:19-20; 3:20; Heb. 1:3). God is all powerful. His power is infinite. He can do anything that is not contrary to His perfect character and nature. He never abuses His absolute power. God’s power is unlimited.

God has attributes to Moral Beings: Veracity and Faithfulness. God is infinite perfection in veracity and faithfulness. This is revealed to us through Bible Doctrine. Veracity (Psa. 33:4; Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19). God honors Bible Doctrine resident in the soul of the believer. God is Truth as an attribute. Therefore, He must honor Truth resident in our souls. God honors His Word wherever it is found. God’s Word in the souls of believers is the only thing that saves a Client Nation to God. God is faithful (Deut. 7:9; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 1:9). Because God honors doctrine in the souls of believers, God faithfully provides the believer with logistical support for us on earth as we grow to spiritual maturity. God faithfully takes care of us even when we are unfaithful to Him (2 Tim. 2:13). God is faithful even when we fail because we possess one half of the divine integrity, righteousness. The believer whose soul is filled with doctrine has fully adjusted to the justice of God. He possesses a total relationship with the integrity of God. He is Mercy and Goodness (Ex. 22:27; 34:6; Psa. 116:5; 1 Pet. 2:3). Mercy is God’s grace in action. Mercy is God’s infinite love in action toward the objects of divine affection. Category one love is our love toward God. Category one love is also God’s mercy seen from the other side, i.e., His love toward us. God’s love and affection is directed toward the believer because he possesses divine righteousness acquired at the moment of faith in Christ.

He is Justice and Righteousness. Infinite integrity acting toward others is justice. Justice is the function of God’s divine integrity. Righteousness is the principle of divine integrity. God’s righteousness is perfect and demands perfect justice. What the righteousness of God demands, the justice of God executes. In righteousness is God’s love for His integrity revealed. In justice is God’s hatred for sin revealed. Integrity demands integrity.

Other Divine Characteristics.
The Freedom of God is not truly an attribute of God but God’s sovereignty is. God cannot compromise His essence. The Incarnation and spiritual death of Christ was the only way the free will of God (His sovereignty) could provide salvation for man. God is free to bless man only when man is adjusted to His justice. First at salvation by believing Christ. Secondly, with the provision of Rebound (1 Jn. 1:9).

The Bible uses Anthropopathisms. Anthropopathisms ascribe to God human characteristics which He does not have, in order to explain God’s policy or viewpoint to us in terms of human attitudes. Examples of Anthropopathisms: (1) Repentance (Gen. 6:6): God does not really change His mind, He is immutable. (2) Hatred (Rom. 9:13): This is an expression of divine justice. (3) Anger (Rom. 1:18): God’s judgments are not based upon passion. (4) Scorn (Psa. 2:4). (5) Benevolence (Rom. 8:32). (6) Compassion (Lam. 3:22-32). (7) Longsuffering (Num. 14:18). (8) Happiness (God is infinitely happy in Himself and is free from anxiety and fear).

God’s authority is derived from all His attributes. God has absolute authority over possible things and actual things. God is sovereign. He is the boss. No one tells Him what to do. He has final and absolute authority over all existing things (Psa. 145:14; Matt. 20:15; 1 Tim. 6:15). God delegates His authority in both the human and angelic realms. God has delegated and established systems of authority in the human race which we call divine establishment: (1) Volition over the soul. (2) Husband over the wife in marriage. (3) Parents over the children in the family. (4) Government over its citizens.

The authority of God rests in 3 facts: (1) God is the Creator and has authority over His creation. (2) God has redeemed us and has authority over the whole human race. (3) God has provided Bible Doctrine.

Satan’s Anti-Theistic Theories.

Satan tries to destroy our understanding of the character of God. He uses many systems and approaches to do so. Polytheism is the belief in a plurality of gods, such as the Greek and Roman pantheons. Pantheism is the philosophy that God and the universe are one and that the universe conceived of as a whole is God. It denies that God transcends the universe or is outside of the universe. Pantheism also denies the personality of God. It says that God did not create the universe.

Materialism is a form of atheism that denies the existence of God and claims that material substance is the basis of and the explanation of all things. Communism has materialism as its philosophy. Deism says that God is personal, infinite, holy and the Creator of the universe but states that He abandoned the
universe after creating it. Deism rejects the Word of God which says that God does intervene in human affairs. Thomas Paine, David Hume, Thomas Jefferson, Edward Gibbon and Voltaire were deists.

Idealism is a system of thinking which contends that the mind is the only thing and the material universe is merely an illusion. Evolution states that the universe has developed from simple crude material into its present complex state. It states that this material developed on its own.

There is also Theistic Evolution which claims that although God is the Creator of the original materials, evolution is the method by which all life has developed. Atheistic Evolution rejects the existence of God and claims that matter is eternal and develops by itself. Positivism accepts as true only what can be verified by literally pointing it out. It disregards God and the human soul. Monism states that there is only one kind of substance or reality instead of two. Dualism refers to mind and matter. Pluralism refers to many independent substances. Biblical Theism is the doctrine of the essence of God.