

Classical Theism (Part 3 – ‘Ehyeh, the Trinity and the Incarnation)

GOD SAID TO MOSES,

“I AM WHO I AM.”

AND HE SAID, “SAY THIS TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL,

‘I AM

HAS SENT ME TO YOU’.”

EXODUS 3:14

Special: Classical Theism (3) – ‘Ehyeh, the Simplicity of God, The Trinity, and the Incarnation

Bible Doctrines (The True-Good-Beautiful)

T/G/B

Eschatology
Thanatology
Ecclesiology
Israelology
Dispensationalism
Doxology
Hodology
Soteriology
Hamartiology
Natural Law
Anthropology
Angelology
Pneumatology
Christology
Paterology
Trinitarianism
Cosmology
Theology Proper
Bibliology
Natural Theology

The transcendent life, Psalm 73:21-26; 1 Thess. 5:18.

Prayer: 1 Jn 1:7. Conduit view of walking by HS vs. Christ’s walking by HS (John 8:29; Heb. 12:1-2)

3 Parts to Bible Class: PR helps us make sense of the Bible in a way that nothing else can.

Part I: Spiritual basics: Analogous God-talk and God’s love.

Part II: Philosophical foundations. POL: Introduction to Gottlob Frege

Part III: Doctrinal development: Special – Classical theism 3: Developing metaphysical categories for Trinity and HU.

Part I: Basics: Spiritual foundations: God-talk and love (1 Cor. 13; Gal 5:13-15; 22-23).

1. We are examining love from human and divine perspective. Love is the greatest virtue, 1 Cor. 13. It can also be the greatest vice, Jn 3:19. Love is what drives all men. But what about God’s love? What is the nature of God’s love.
2. We have noted the three options regarding God-talk.
 - a. Univocal – God’s love is the same as man’s love only different in degree.
 - b. Equivocal—God’s love is nothing like man’s love.
 - c. Analogical—God’s love is like man’s love in some respects but not in other respects.
3. It is important for the believer to realize that all God-talk is analogical. Univocal predication of God causes many problems. It even makes the very difficult doctrine of the Trinity even more difficult.
4. Love is an act of the will in which good is wanted for oneself or another. Three different kinds of love:
 - a. Love of concupiscence: an act in which we love something for the good we derive from it.
 - b. Love of benevolence: an act in which we love another for the good that he has or that we wish him to have.
 - c. Love of complacence: an act in which one delights in and enjoys the good of another or of himself.
5. God’s love:
 - a. God loves Himself with a love of complacence, and things other than Himself with a love of benevolence.
 - b. God wills and loves Himself necessarily and things distinct from Himself freely.
 - c. God cannot not want His own infinite goodness, since it is one with His being and will.
 - d. Since God as *Esse* is the existential cause of all things, God loves all things by willing their goodness, which is their existence and their perfections.
 - e. The action of God’s love is in His intimate presence and providential care for all things.
 - f. God is not one cause among others but the transcendent cause of all, and the source of His causality is nothing more than His gratuitous love.
 - g. Before any creature came to be, God’s love was eternally shared in the triune life of Father, Son, and HS.
 - h. The act of creation did not spring from any need on God’s part. Rather, His abundant love gave rise to the dynamic world of creatures that continue to share in God’s own causality. Love really is the unfathomable source of all causality. The fact that there is anything at all is because of the love of God.
 - i. God seeks the good of all creatures, Rom. 11:36. It is impossible for God not to draw all to Himself.

5: Hermeneutics

4: Language-83

3: Epistemology 32

- Existence 50

- History 50

2:Metaphysics 32

- Trans. 50

1: Reality

- Logic 32,

- Truth 32

Outline

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ What is philosophy of language?
- ✓ Theories of meaning
- ✓ Plato's *Cratylus*
 - Hermogenes
 - Cratylus
 - Socrates
- ✓ Aristotle (384-322 BC)
- ✓ Transition to modern philosophy of language
- ✓ Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

Gottlob Frege (1848-1925)

Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)

Ludwig Wittgenstein
(1889-1951).

Martin Heidegger
(1889-1976).

W. V. O. Quine (1908-2000).

Noam Chomsky (1928-)

Realist view of meaning.

Foundation of meaning.

Communication of meaning.

Elements of language.

Function of language

Meaningful God-talk.

Analytic Philosophy

Conclusion.

Analogy.

Metaphysical analogy.

1. The more one understands how language maps on reality the more one has capacity to think as a true Realist.
2. To think like a Realist is to be able to better understand God, the Bible, creation, the spiritual life and one's culture. The latter of which enables one to escape from one's cultural captivity.
3. Consider the disgrace anti-intellectualism of contemporary Christianity as exemplified by anti-intellectualism when it comes to understanding technical language. Consider the stakes in understanding the Bible, God, man, and ultimate reality. Why do we need it more than those who lived in Bible times? Consider how easy to have heretical views simply by univocal language and Cratylean exegesis. Anti-intellectualism defaults into reducing the relevance of God to our problems and psychological needs, leading to spiritual self-victimization.

4. Review of how thinkers thought about reality and language. Our understanding of language has a direct effect on our view of God, reality, and the spiritual life. The issue before all of these men has to do with the connection between what is in the mind and what is in reality.
 - a. Parmenides.
 - b. Heraclitus.
 - c. Cratylus.
 - d. Hermogenes.
 - e. Socrates/Plato.
 - f. Aristotle.
 - g. Rene Descartes.
 - h. Immanuel Kant.
 - i. Ferdinand de Saussure.

Gottlob Frege

5. Gottlob Frege was a German mathematician. He is considered the father of analytical philosophy and is famous for his writings on philosophy of language and mathematics.

6. Before we move into his complex system of symbolic logic, we need to develop some metaphysical categories so we can understand some of the issues and what in the world he is talking about.



1848-1925

7. In dealing with language and its connection with reality, we need to make a distinction between categorematic and syncategorematic words.
 - a. Mortimer Adler provides a helpful description on the distinction between the two kinds of words: “The words classified as categorematic have lexical meaning in their own right and without serving to qualify or modify the meaning possessed by other words. In contrast, the words classified as syncategorematic, and sometimes called ‘particles’ . . . do not have lexical meaning in their own right, but only when they serve to qualify, modify, or relate other words in significant phrases or sentences.”

- b. The function of categorematic or name-words, then, is to designate some thing, state, or relation that actually exists or could exist in reality.
- c. Syncategorematic words function syntactically in meaningful phrases or sentences. Syncategorematic words can also represent real relations or logical relations.
- d. The linguistic nature of words, then, is exhausted in these two categories. As Mortimer Adler asserts, “All the words listed in the dictionary of a language can be exhaustively divided into name words having designative significance and linguistic operators having syntactical significance

Developing Metaphysical

Understanding of 'Ehyeh, Simplicity, the Trinity and the Hypostatic Union

John 1:1-2, 14, 18.

1. John 1 screams for a new conceptual view of God than found in the Old Testament. Consider the questions? How many Gods? In what sense is Jesus the Word. In what way is He the Logos before the Father? In what way is Logos unique in the OT and in man? This passage, and others in the NT like Heb. 1, raise a whole new set of questions about the nature of God. Guess what? Original languages do not help here. In fact, one can get into heresy very quickly by building reality on the words, like “become” in 1:14.
2. Why did God gives us this revelation? To move us into tritheism or polytheism? To confuse us? For us to ignore it? For us to just to wave it all off with our triangle illustrations? To gives us insights into the inner life of the Trinity so we can relate to God in a Trinitarian fashion?

3. John opens with full-blown Christology that goes back to eternity past and the inner life of the Father and the Son. This sets the stage for all that is in John from the I AM statements to the Light of the world to “it is finished.” The LOGOS is the perfect concept for OT, the Greek world, all men. The idea is one of rationality or reason that pervades order throughout the universe.
4. The question really is all about who this Jesus is, cf. Philip 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-14. There never was any question among the first Christians as to the deity of Jesus Christ. Yet, these Jewish Christians were absolute monotheists.
5. How can Jesus be God and the Father be God and the Holy Spirit be God and yet there are identical in essence? God is not composed! Is the Father the Word? Did the Father die on the Cross? The development of the Trinity is but the attempt to uphold all of Scripture.

6. Once you confess the divinity of Christ and you really mean it, then you are already on a voyage to rethink God. Your view of God should undergo a transformation based on John 1:1-2. Is there one God or two? To the Christian community that was never a problem. They always thought that Jesus was the revelation of this one God. However, little by little, they were forced to deal with questions regarding this revelation. It took them about them about 381 years to provide and explication of the Trinity.
7. While there are hints of the trinity in the OT, in the NT we have explicit reference to the inner life of God. Greek philosophical and ontological conceptual vocabulary is more helpful because it is more precise than Hebrew, which tends to be more metaphorical.

8. The Trinity is a distinctly Christian doctrine that says within the one being of God there are three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are really distinct from each other. This doctrine is a mystery in that it is beyond the natural powers of human reasoning and so presupposes God's revelation in Scripture. This requires an understanding of the distinctions between natural theology and sacred theology, natural sciences and the queen of sciences, lower sciences and higher sciences. We are indeed dealing with arational (not irrational) principles of faith.

9. There are five divine propositions that one has to put together to stay faithful to all of the data of Scripture. God gives us the data and gives us the task of putting it all together. The five non-negotiable truths of sacred doctrine.
 - a. There is one God (uncomposed).
 - b. The Father is God.
 - c. The Son is God.
 - d. The Holy Spirit is God.
 - e. They are distinct.

10. Trinity as declared in orthodox creeds goes as far back as the Apostles' Creed, and the Nicene Creed and they all consistent state that

Firmly, we believe and simply we confess that one alone is true God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, three persons, but one essence, one substance, and one nature entirely simple. The Father is from no one, the Son from the Father alone, and the Holy Ghost equally from both, consubstantial, co-equal, co-omnipotent, and co-eternal. We confess and believe that it is one supreme being, incomprehensible and ineffable; this supreme being is truly the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons together and each one singly; and therefore in God there is only a Trinity.

11. All understanding of God must begin with Exodus 3:14. This must be the foundation for all theological reflection, including the Trinity and the hypostatic union. 'Ehyeh is the starting point! One must start with unity, not diversity (Eastern Church). Principles on Exodus 3:14:
 - a. God introduces Himself with "I AM WHO I AM." This is the causative form of the verb meaning "to be" (Greek translation is a bit more specific). The entire phrase is collapsed into one name very deliberately. This I AM is Jesus of John.
 - b. He is a personality. However, we must remember analogical language with reference to God. His personality is revealed in anthropomorphisms and morphisms.

- c. There is simply no other being like 'Ehyeh on Earth or in Heaven. This is why images are forbidden. He is not just a bigger version of some created thing (cf., Egyptians).

- d. The fact that He is IS means He is the only one who has absolute and unqualified possession of existence. We never have possession of the present. God is radically one in BE and so timeless and simple.

e. Illustration of the Trinity from the Burning Bush.

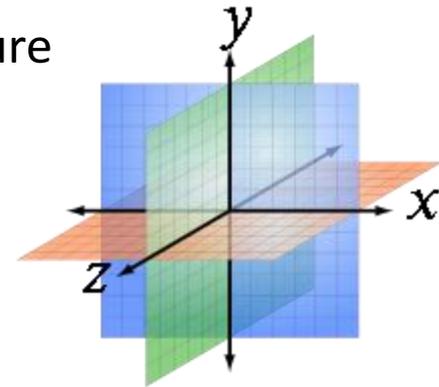
- 1) Transcendence of the Father. God the Father is transcendent, mysterious, and incalculable.
- 2) Revelation of the Son. The Son reveals the Father. He is the Logos.
- 3) Immanence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in creation.

f. There are two ways to view the Trinity.

- 1) The Economic (*oikonomikos*) Trinity. This is how they relate to each other and the world as revealed in Scripture. This is also how we relate to them in our relationship. We pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, and by the power of the Holy Spirit because we recognize the different roles. This is a normal part of the Christian life.
- 2) The Ontological Trinity. This is understanding on a rational level the inner communal life of the Trinity. This is deep insight into the exact nature of the inner trinitarian life—to see the one what and three whos. I would add that the greatest Christian minds have recognized the limits of language when attempting to explicate the nature of the inner life. This is seeing into *Esse* and seeing existence as such and three co-substantial persons in one BE.

12. To study the Trinity is to move into the highest of sciences, the queen of sciences. Consider lower and higher levels of science:

- a. Lower levels of science: Geometry has first principles that it takes for granted, like two parallel lines do not meet at infinity. This axiom is accepted by faith and not proven in geometry. Its starting position that is established by a higher science.
- b. Higher levels of science: Physics and philosophy of nature are the higher sciences for aspects of geometry. The higher science in the case of geometry for this axiom would be philosophy of nature where questions regarding the nature of space would be examined. Consider the Einsteinian universe where the lines would meet at infinity as space curves in on itself. Consider the role of philosophy as handmaid as tool with law of contradiction, categories, natures, etc. By the way Einstein was committed to metaphysics as a science and warned against being ignorant of its history.
- c. Aristotle's shipbuilding analogy.



13. In dealing with the science of God and ultimate reality, it is important to make distinctions between preambles of the faith and articles of faith. While both are sacred doctrine, there are differences.
 - a. Preambles of the faith are those which are contained in Scripture, but can be accessed through natural revelation, Rom. 1:20.
 - b. Articles of faith include such things as the Trinity, salvation, the deity of Christ, the hypostatic union.
 - c. Articles of faith cannot be demonstrated or proven (or disproven) in the natural realm. There are no rationally compelling arguments that can be given for the Trinity or the hypostatic union.
 - d. Articles of faith are accepted without question by the people of God.
 - e. I can give you natural reasons for God, I cannot give you natural reasons to accept the Trinity or the hypostatic union. However, it is our job to defend it rationally.
 - f. Conviction or assurance of the articles of faith are supernatural gifts from God.

The nature of faith as it relates to authority, Hebrews 11.

1. This faith (11:1-3) is not a philosophical proof. The faith is always in some authority. In this case it is the authority of God. It is the object of knowledge that makes the difference. There is no way they would have faith apart from accepting God's authority. They trusted God's Word!
2. The faith is the evidence of believing God's Word, 11:4ff. By faith we believe that God created the universe. Why? Because He said so. This is the case in every example in Hebrews 11. This is an article of faith. It is because they believed God that they knew these things. It really is a matter of trusting Him! Why would a believer ever doubt God's faithfulness? Why would a believer ever think that God is untrustworthy? Faith is all about leaning on what God says, not our imaginations.

3. What about areas where preambles of the faith and articles of faith overlap, like in Romans 1:20? The preambles of faith can be proved by natural revelation, though it often takes many years and filled with many errors.
4. Faith in the articles of faith. God gives us faith in the sense of strengthening our mind and will in our response to Him. This is the only way we can believe in the articles of faith. He gives us ability to believe and apprehend the higher sciences, ultimate science.

Matthew 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

1 John 3:24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.