

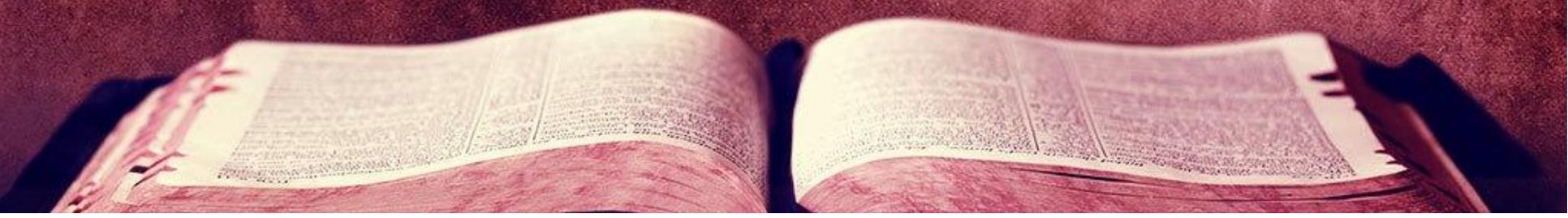
FAITH BIBLE CHURCH

Christmas 2015 (Part 2)

-Esse

-The Simplicity of God

-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

Psalm 73:23-28. The point, goal and *telos* of life is to love, revere, and worship the Lord, 1 Cor. 2:9.

Prayer: Thanking God for very good and perfect gift, James 1:17.

3 Parts to Bible Class:

Part I: The spiritual virtues of love and joy.

Part II: Philosophical foundations. Review of the key figures from Plato to Saussure.

Part III: Doctrinal development: Christmas Special 2- Esse, the simplicity of God, and incarnation.

Part I: Spiritual foundations: love, joy, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 13; Gal 5:13-15; 22-23).

1. Love for God is the root, hinge, fruit, and form of any and all spiritual virtue. The Bible explicitly connects love with true fellowship with God. There can be no thriving fellowship with God with any kind of invidious attitude.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 13:3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
 - c. Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
 - d. 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.
 - e. 1 John 4:12 No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
 - f. 1 John 4:16 And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.
2. It is love for God that has the most pervasive influence on all of our thinking, appetites, affections, attitudes, goals, and perspectives. It has enormous unitive power (hinge) over all virtues, Gal. 5:22-23.
3. This love is produced by the Holy Spirit but not like a *deus ex machina* that appears out of nowhere when the right buttons are pushed. The Holy Spirit abides in the intellect and will and works in concurrence with the believer and the plan of God. Even God cannot give virtue to those who live in darkness.
4. The first movement of the soul is love for God and this love leads to joy in God. Joy, like love, is not some abstract property that is attached to the believer. This joy is nothing short of the joy when one possesses the loved object. So, joy really is not so much another virtue distinct from love, but rather a certain effect of love itself. This joy is a direct result of conscious life in God, His love, grace, and transcendent plan.

5: Hermeneutics

4: Language-75

3: Epistemology 32

- Existence 50
- History 50

2:Metaphysics 32

- Trans. 50

1: Reality

- Logic 32,
- Truth 32

Part 2: Philosophy of Language (75)

Outline

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ What is philosophy of language?
- ✓ Theories of meaning
- ✓ *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.

Ideas have consequences!

1. Who anchors meaning/reality in linguistic communities?
2. Who anchors meaning/reality in God's direct enlightenment, Jn 1:9?
3. Who anchors meaning/reality in the mind and denied Forms?
4. Who creates meaning/reality with categories of the mind (e.g., causation)?
5. Who is the only one who makes objective meaning, CT, & science possible?



Plato
428-348 B. C.



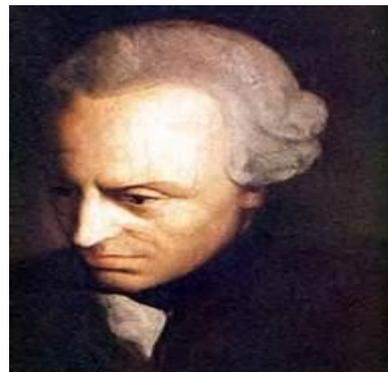
Aristotle
384-322 B.C.



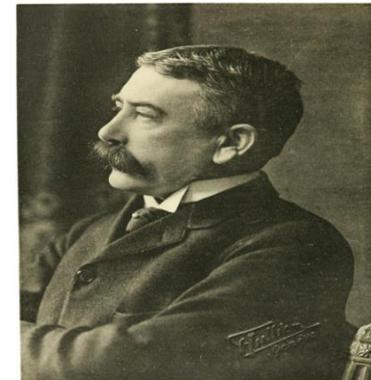
Augustine of Hippo
354-430



Rene Descartes
1596-1650



Immanuel Kant
1724-1804



Ferdinand de Saussure
1857-1913

Hebrews 2:5-18.

1. Heb. 2:5. The coming Kingdom will be ruled by Christ and His overcomers (partakers)—not angels.
Revelation 2:26 'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.
2. Heb. 2:6-9. It is the incarnation and Christ's tasting death for every person made it possible for mankind to regain glory and the Kingdom.
3. Heb. 2:10-18. Note the deep unity between Jesus Christ and believers. God the Son made this all possible through suffering because of the Cross. Note only sanctification and a future beyond description, but a present help in any and all needs.
4. Heb. 2:10. Him, "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things" (δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα), refers to *Esse*. This provides us the opportunity to enter the wonderful world of classical Christianity and the unique doctrines of *Esse*, the simplicity of God, the incarnation, and the trinity.

1. Overview of the simplicity of God, *Esse*.
 - a. God is *Actus Purus*, Pure Act, a BEING lacking any composition of actuality and potentiality. He is just ACT. He is not becoming anything. He is dynamic, rich, full plentitude of being, constantly expressing His nature. He is the ultimate in bliss, Perfection, Happiness, Joy—all in dynamic infinite state.
 - b. While God does not have properties, for properties ground power, He does have attributes. However, the classification of attributes are according to human reason. They are true statements that correspond to the being of God, but these true statements are made according to our mode of being. In other words, we know the simple Being through what is called distinctions in our reason. The diversity is just our expression due to our limited concept of being—God is good, God is wise, God is just—are all about a single simple being.
 - c. Without divine simplicity, one ends up in contradictions in the Trinity, such as tri-theism and modalism. There is but one being but three distinct, but not separate or separated Persons.

2. Broadly speaking, there are two views of God:

- a. Modern: Neo-theism, personal theism (e.g. Finis Dake, open theism, and most of modern evangelicalism). This view starts with men. Personal theism views God very much like human beings, but much more powerful. This neo-theistic way of viewing God begins with man to build an idea of God. While it makes God more personable in some way, it creates a host of other problems as it makes God just a bigger version of Man, albeit invisible with superhuman powers. One must be metaphysically minded before one can get it; analytical philosophers do not get it (cf., Craig, Moreland).
- b. Classical theism (historical orthodox Christian position in the Roman Church as well as in the Reformed Church). This view starts with BE, 'Ehyeh, Esse, as such as revealed in Exodus 3:14. In this view God is not a person with separate attributes or properties. He is extremely personal, but it is His being that is the ground of everything. God has properties but not multiple attributes. God really is not like us in being. He is not the big blue whale.

3. Historical witnesses to the simplicity of God.

- a. Historian Richard Muller informs us that “the doctrine of divine simplicity is among the normative assumptions of theology from the time of the church fathers, to the age of the great medieval scholastics system, to the era of the Reformation and post-Reformation theology, and indeed, on into succeeding era of late orthodoxy.”

b. Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF 2.1):

“There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute.”

- 1) “Without parts” signifies the Westminster divines’ commitment to the classical doctrine of divine simplicity.
- 2) “Most absolute” means that no principle or power stands back of or alongside God by which He instantiates or understands His existence/essence. He alone is the sufficient reason for His own existence.
- 3) God is identical to His existence and essence and each of His attributes is ontological identical with His existence and with every other one of His attributes. There is nothing in God that is not God.

- 4) God is identical to His existence and essence and each of His attributes is ontological identical with His existence and with every other one of His attributes. There is nothing in God that is not God.

- 5) God is the most simple being; for that which is first in nature, having nothing beyond it, cannot by any means be thought to be compounded; for whatsoever is so, depends upon the parts whereof it is compounded, and so is not the first being; now God being infinitely simple, has nothing in Himself which is not Himself, and therefore cannot will any change in Himself, He being His own essence and existence.

- c. Irenaeus. “He is simple, uncompounded Being, without diverse members, and altogether like, and equal to Himself, since He is wholly understanding, and wholly spirit, and wholly thought, and wholly intelligence, and wholly reason, and wholly hearing, and wholly seeing, and wholly light, and the whole source of all that is good.”
- 1) He, like all of the Church Fathers, used the doctrine of simplicity to ensure there was no misunderstanding that this was not a union of three gods.
 - 2) He wanted to show the Greek emanationists that God neither exhibited passions or mental alterations.

- d. Augustine. “It is for this reason, then, that the nature of the Trinity is called simple, because it has not anything which it can lose, and because it is not one thing and its contents another, as a cup and the liquor, or a body and its color . . . Or a mind and its wisdom. . . . So for God to be is the same as to subsist, and therefore if the Trinity is one being, it is also one substance.”
- Augustine affirms the identity of God’s existence and essence and denies that God’s attributes are in any way separable from His essence. God simply is whatever is predicated of Him and none of His essential attributes is really or conceptually separable from Him.

- e. Boethius. “But the Divine Substance is form without matter, and is therefore one, and is its own essence.”

- f. Anselm. “Undoubtedly, whatever Thou [God] are, Thou art through nothing else than Thyself. Therefore, Thou art the very life whereby Thou livest; and the wisdom wherewith Thou art wise, and the very goodness whereby Thou art good to the righteous and the wicked; and so of other like attributes. . . . For whatever is composed of parts is not altogether one, but is some sort of plural . . . Hence there are no part in Thee, Lord. . . Therefore, love and wisdom and the rest are not parts of Thee, but are all one; and each of these is the whole, which Thou art, and which all the rest are.

g. Aquinas. “Every composite . . . is subsequent to its components. The first being, therefore, which is God, has no components. . . . Every composition, likewise, needs some composer. . . . God’s essence is identical with His existence and therefore God is absolutely necessary and self-sufficient. . .

- 1) Aquinas provided the greatest contribution to DDS by noting Esse of Exodus 3:14.
- 2) The Reformers did not alter Aquinas’s account of simplicity, except to bring in more biblical passages.

- h. John Owen. 'Were He composed of parts, accidents, manner of being, He could not be first . .' [Owen on Exodus 3:14] Where there is absolute oneness and sameness in the whole, there is no composition by an union of extremes . . He, then, who is what He is, and whose is that is in Him is, Himself, has neither parts, accidents, principles, nor anything else, whereof His essence should be compounded.
- i. Herman Bavinck. " The simplicity is of great importance for our understanding of God. It is not only taught in Scripture (where God is called "light," "life," "love"), but also automatically follows from the idea of God and is necessarily implied in the other attributes. If God is composed of parts, like a body, or compose of genus and attributes, substance and accidents, matter and form, potentiality and actuality, essence and existence, then His perfection, oneness, independence, and immutability, cannot be maintained."
- If God were not simple, He could not be Absolute.

- j. Louis Berkhof. DDS “implies among other things that the three Persons of the Godhead are not so many parts of which the Divine essence is composed, that God’s essence and perfections are not distinct, and that the attributes are not superadded to His essence. “
- k. Due to modern rejection of metaphysics, the DDS has fallen on hard times. What was once a core tenant of Christianity in the Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, and post-Reformation periods, is openly rejected by many in mainstream Christianity (Plantinga, Nash, Feinberg, Moreland, Craig).

- I. The outstanding common denominator in each of the attacks on DDS is the strong commitment to ontological univocism. Each critic speaks as if God and creatures were being in the exact sense, reducing the Creator-creature distinction to a difference of degrees. God is viewed as a higher existence and His attributes more perfect. In other words, God just has more and greater attributes than found in creation. Therefore, God could no more be identical with His existence and attributes any more than creature could be identical with its existence and attributes. In sum, God is like the blue whale among all of the fish of the oceans.

1. Exodus 3:14-15. There is nowhere a more profound truth in all of Scripture than we find in this passage, the BE passage. To grasp this is to make a major transition in how one views all of reality. Most importantly, it provides the capacity for God for a reverence and adoration that differs from any anything or anyone in the created realm. It is one thing to worship Him for His gifts, it is another to worship Him because of who and what He is in all of His transcendent majesty. This goes far beyond solving our problems
2. Exodus 3:14. This is the self-revelation of Ehyeh, “for whom are all things, and through whom are all things” (Heb. 2:10) to Moses. Recall, that in the Bible, names reveal character.
3. Exodus 3:15. A few words about the Hebrew words used of BE, which is His memorial name to all generations, forever. The language points to God as the most perfect being: BE!

4. 'Ehyeh and the aseity of God.
 - a. Aseity refers to self-existence. This one little word captures all of the glory of the perfection of His being—what makes God different from everything else, any creaturely thing. God and God alone exists by His own power. Nobody made Him. Nobody caused Him. His existence is and of Himself, so different than any other being.
 - b. God did not tell Moses “once in a point of time, I was, and I will be in the future.” Rather, He introduced Himself in the eternal present: BE.
 - c. Why is there something rather than nothing?
 - d. Proving the existence of God is not difficult: “If anything exists, something, somewhere, somehow must have the power of being in Himself, without which nothing can exist. If there were ever nothing, there would still be nothing. There are only 3 choices for anything:
 - 1) It is eternal.
 - 2) It is self-created (spontaneous generation). This is ludicrous, a logical impossibility. For something to create itself, it would have to be before it was. It would have to be and not be at the same time—violating the formal principle of non-contradiction and most fundamental principle of science: out of nothing, nothing comes.
 - 3) It is created by something that is eternal.

5. 'Ehyeh and simplicity, along with analogical predication, enables us to bring together a way of thinking and speaking about divine unity and trinity—that God is one and that the Lord our God is one—that does justice to the manifold witness of Scripture and to ways of handling its apparent references to divine complexity and disunity in a way that considering each isolated passage could never do.
6. God does not depend for His existence on operations or forces working upon Him. He is the necessary, self-existing BE. God is the Creator and Sustainer of time and space and all that it contains.

7. This means that God is not composed of elements that are more ultimate, in a logical or metaphysical sense, than He is. God has no parts and so is not divisible.

8. 'Ehyeh and DS enable us to understand the trinity in terms of distinction without division. Christian theologians have routinely stated that the threefoldness of the Trinity—that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each person being wholly divine—refers to distinctions in the Godhead, not to divisions in it. All divisions involve distinctions, but not vice versa. To see a division of Father and Son would be to denote different parts in God, each of which is separable from the other.

9. Because God is timeless, He is changeless, immutable. He is metaphysically changeless. He is eternally impassioned in that He is unwaveringly good, not moody or fitful as one who is hit with the changes of His life.
10. Yet the Bible describes God as changing, repenting, being grieved, rejoicing, waiting, etc. This cannot be understood apart from simplicity and analogical predication. In other words, how do we reconcile Exodus 3:14 with anthropomorphic and anthropopathic depictions in the Bible? The Bible does speak of God with unqualified unsurpassable greatness. There is no one who can compare to God and His greatness. This could never be said about a God who is like man but just bigger and smarter.

2 Samuel 7:22 "For this reason Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like Thee, and there is no God besides Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

Psalm 95:3 For the LORD is a great God, And a great King above all gods,

Exodus 18:11 "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people."

Psalm 145:3 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.

1 Timothy 6:16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

11. Divine simplicity cannot be grasped apart from grasping the distinction between act and potential, metaphysical orientation, and classical theology. God is Pure Act without any potential capabilities.
 - a. A subject's potential expresses its liability to change and develop, or to be changed. So it is a sign of compositeness.
 - b. Every creature in time and space has potential.
 - c. By contrast, a simple God does not develop by acting, much less by being acted upon. He does not develop at all. His actions express His perfection; they do not contribute to its attainment.
 - d. God's freely expressing His perfection in creation and human redemption is where the greatest sense of incomprehensiveness of the doctrine of God's absoluteness is the highest.

12. Orthodox Christians are universally committed to the confession that God is absolute. However, apart from the doctrine of simplicity, the believer is left with a host of conflicting views of God, like the Trinity and anthropological language of God in light of a God who is outside of time and keeps all things in existence every instant.

13. The simplicity of God declares that there is nothing in God that is not God. If there were, that is, if God were *not* ontologically identical with all that is in Him, then something other than God Himself would be needed to account for His existence, essence, and attributes. But nothing that is not God can sufficiently account for God. He exists in all of His perfections entirely in and through Himself.