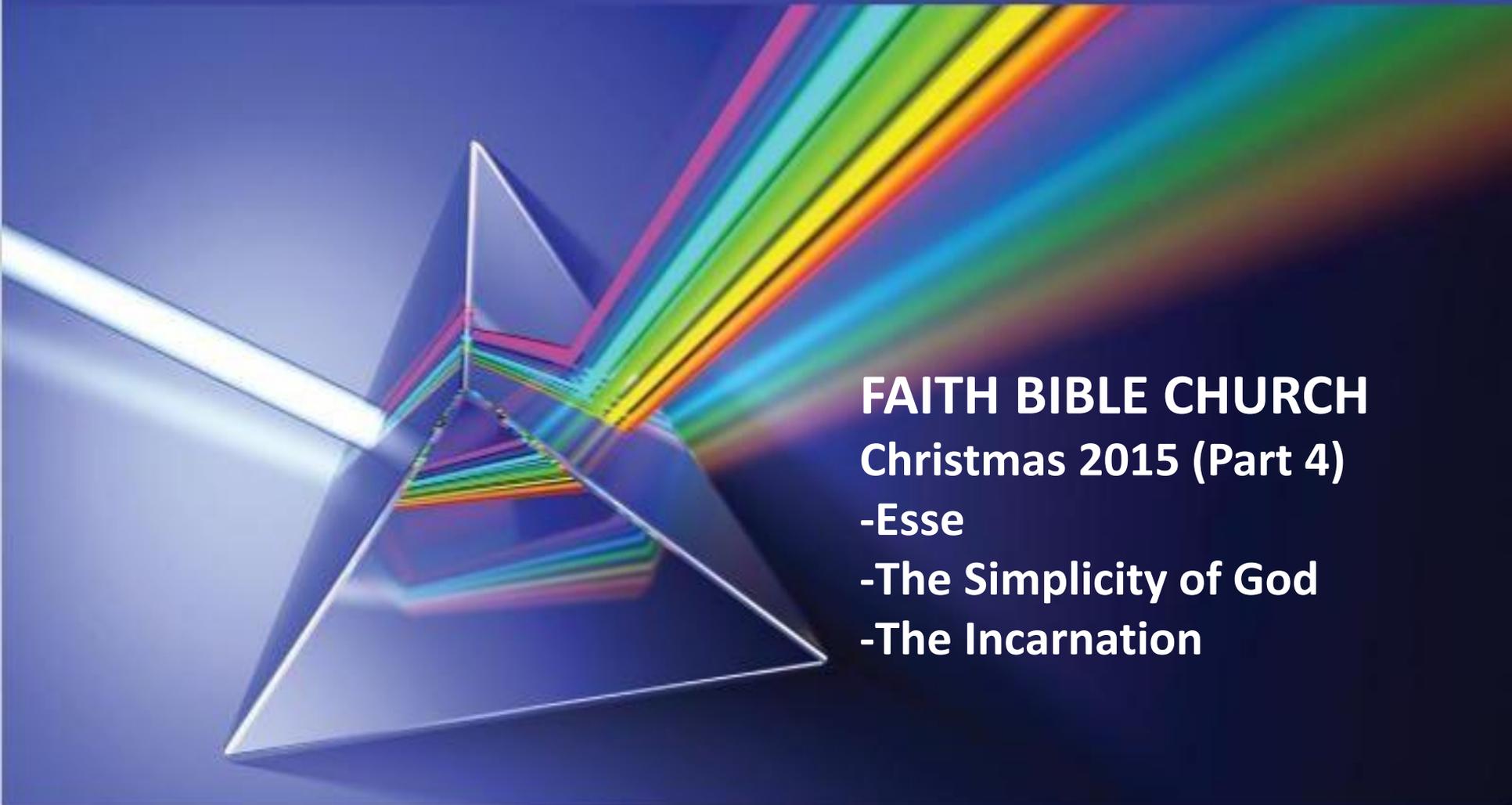


God without Parts

Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness



FAITH BIBLE CHURCH

Christmas 2015 (Part 4)

-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 73:22-28; John 8:31-32.

Prayer: The importance of walking in the light for fellowship and development of the spiritual life, 1 Jn. 1:7.

3 Parts to Bible Class:

Part I: The basics: Understanding the essential/universal meaning of love and joy.

Part II: Philosophical foundations. POL: Plato’s transcendent realm vs. Saussure’s relativistic community

Part III: Doctrinal development: Christmas Special 3- ‘Ehyeh – neo-theism vs. classical theism.

Part I: Basics: Spiritual foundations: the metaphysics of love and joy (1 Cor. 13; Gal 5:13-15; 22-23).

1. Spiritual love for God and all that God loves is the foundation of any and all spiritual virtue
 - a. 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."
 - b. 1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?
 - c. 1 Corinthians 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.
2. The relationship between love and joy.
 - a. The three levels of love and joy: the sensible, the intellectual, and the spiritual.
 - b. Metaphysical understanding of love: what one views as a good on any level, licit or illicit.
 - c. Metaphysical understanding of joy: a direct result of attaining what one loves on any level, licit or illicit.
 - d. Possession of God and His grace benefits bring inexpressible spiritual joy regardless of adversity: 1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
 - e. Because joy is a response to what one apprehends as a good, it cannot in and of itself establish the veridical nature of object as a true good. For example, one could obtain what one *perceives* as good and experience a powerful joy even if that good was not true/good/beautiful (cf., Pentecostalism; cults; Buddhism; evil, Job 20:5, *That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the godless momentary?*)
3. We will receive the most perfect joy when we finally see God face-to-face precisely because we will finally obtain our greatest good: *Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever. Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy*

5: Hermeneutics

4: Language-77

3: Epistemology 32

- Existence 50
- History 50

2:Metaphysics 32

- Trans. 50

1: Reality

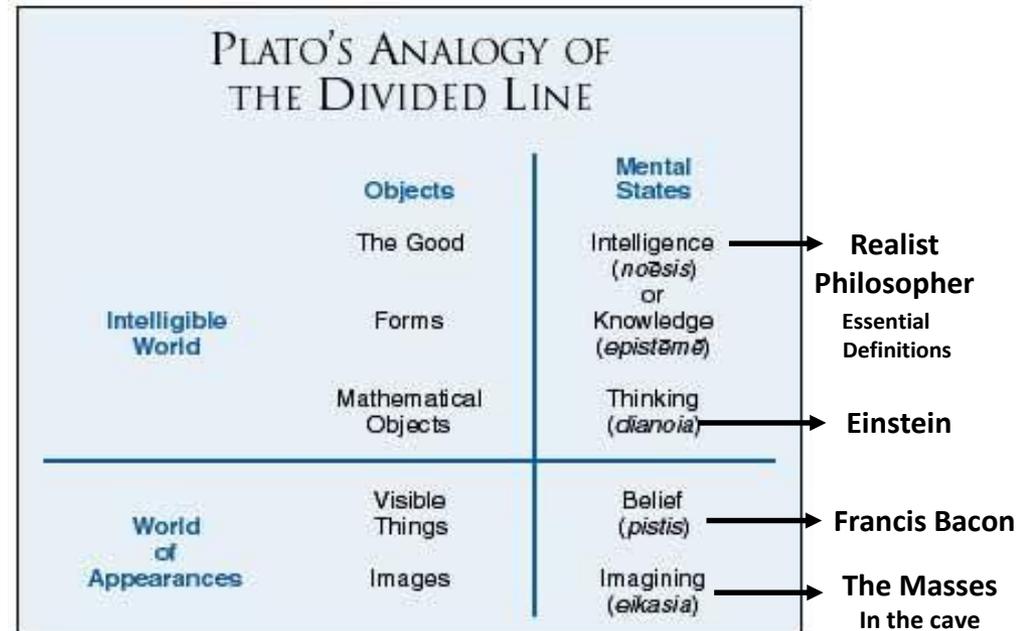
- Logic 32,
- Truth 32

Ancient world

Plato
Justice = Objective Forms



Plato's divided line demonstrating his theory of knowledge



Modern world

Ferdinand de Saussure
Justice = Community Values

Consider the influence of this community view of language and meaning in various Christian "communities" that have their own language which is defined by their own community.



Saussure's Linguistic Sign is not based on external objects.

- The signifier and the signified collapse into one.
- Meaning is determined by community.
- Where would you place this on Plato's divided line?
- Should we be using this model for biblical exegesis?



Introduction:

1. The modern Christian desperately needs to regain his Christian classical heritage for the sake of God, that is, for the sake of understanding God and the true nature of Christianity and the spiritual life. The modern versions of God, even among Bible and doctrinal believers, is very problematic on many fronts.
2. The classical view of God and the spiritual life is far superior to modern systems that are modeled after Rene Descartes, Francis Bacon, William Paley, and Saussure.

3. It is unfortunate that we live in one of the most anti-intellectual (anti-mind), periods of Christian history. The majority of modern education falls under Plato's divided line. The transcendent values have been lost and have been placed in communities.
4. We live in a time when many Christians think that having a childlike *understanding* is a virtue instead of the vice that it is. While childlike *faith* is a virtue, that is, trust in a reliable authority, childlike *understanding* is most certainly not. We are designed by God to keep growing into and beyond adulthood in our understanding of the meatier things of God.

5. No believer should ever be satisfied with an immature understanding of God. Such apathy reflects lack of love and desire to know God more deeply and fully. It is abnormal for any Christian not to have an intense desire to understand His God.
6. In fact, lack of desire to know more about God is nothing short of evil and sin (Heb. 5:11-6:9). Lack of desire for a deeper knowledge of God demonstrates the influence of aberrant philosophies from fideism and pragmatism to secularism and mammonism. Satisfaction with just the milk of the Word speaks more a religion than a relationship.
7. It is the duty of every Christian to understand more and more of His God even though it will never be possible to gain an a comprehensive understanding of God. We can *apprehend* God even if we cannot *comprehend* God. It takes hard work, but we must remember that what God reveals to us He tends for us to apprehend in an intelligible fashion. We need to understand the God who reveals Himself.

Exodus 3:1-7, 13-15. Ehyeh-asher-Ehyeh, Yahweh, BE.

1. It is unfortunate that we modern Christians have lost our classical Christian heritage, especially, the classical view of the God revealed in Exodus 3:1-7, 13-15. Exodus 3:14 is the most significant verse in the entire Word of God.
2. The Word of God leaves no room for deism, neo-deism, or neo-theism.
 - Heb. 2:10. “for whom are **all things**, and through whom are all things”
 - Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power
 - Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever
 - Colossians 1:17 He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**
 - Acts 17:28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said

Exodus 3:2: The aseity of God

1. This passage teaches the immanence, transcendence, the Shekinah glory, and the aseity of God. The doctrine of the aseity of God declares that God is not contingent. Moreover, the aseity of God lays the foundation for the doctrine of divine simplicity.
 - a. The doctrine of aseity maintains that God is entirely self-sufficient and does not depend on anyone or anything for His existence and essence; that is, He is *a se* (of or from himself). God is the BE by which He exists.
 - b. Aseity denies that God is caused to be in any way whatsoever and that He is, in Himself, the fullness of Being. He is absolute Being. He is absolutely independent in His existence. He does not exist through any other.

- c. All other beings exist through something or other. All other beings have their existence and essence by participation in something other than themselves.
- d. The fact that all other things EXISTS through another indicates existence through a cause because that which is, the subject, is not-identical to that by which it is.
- e. To maintain that God exists *a se* is to say that God Himself is the sufficient ontological condition and explanation for His existence and essence.
- f. It is God's identity with His existence and essence that ensures that He is wholly non-derived and sufficient in Himself.

2. Doctrine of divine simplicity.

- a. According to classical theism (Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, et. al) God is radically unlike creatures in that He is void of any complexity and composition whether physical or metaphysical.
- b. This means that God is free from matter and form composition, potency and act composition, substance and accidents composition, and existence and essence composition.

- c. There is no real distinction between God and His attributes. God is thus equal with all of His attributes, which implies that each attribute is identical to each other one. God does not have omniscience. He is omniscience. The same holds true of all other attributes. God is what He has. God is identical to what He is and He is identical to His nature. Since His nature is identical to His existence, God is identical to His existence.

- d. The simplicity of God affirms God's absolute transcendence. It also demonstrates His wholly otherness—God is radically not-anthropomorphic; He is radically non-creature-morphic. God differs in His ontology from any and every being.

- e. God has no parts upon which He depends. He does not depend upon anything. He does not depend upon His will or intellect or love or wisdom. He just is all of those things as *Esse*. He is totally different from any and all creatures.

Isaiah 44:6 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: `I *am* the First and I *am* the Last; Besides Me *there is* no God.

The Being and Action of God in all things.

1. God is unlike all other things. While it may be admitted that creatures are in some way like God, God is not like creatures. A creature can be spoken of as in some way like God; but God is not like a creature. He is the Wholly Other
2. In God/Esse, essence and existence are the same; in every creature, they are distinct. God alone is Being by virtue of His own essence, since His essence is His existence; whereas every creature has or possesses an existence that is distinct from its nature or essence—every duck hunter knows that every duck does not inherently possess the property of existence.

3. The action of God in sustaining the world is, in a sense, simply a continuation of the original act of creation.
4. If we recognize that God's way of being is different from that of creatures, we can assert that His way acting will also be different, since action follows being. Since God's being is one, His action cannot be distinct from His being but must be one with it. His action is therefore utterly different from that of creatures, since the action of no creature is the same as its being.

5. When God is understood as *Esse*, His motion is not an exterior manipulation of created agents. Just as creation is not a change, so too divine motion is not the effecting of a change in something with independent existence.

6. The primary mode of *Esse's* causation is creative and constitutive, not controlling and compelling. God is not a rival or auxiliary to created causes. He is the One who makes all causes be causes. Just as creation is not a change, so too the divine motion is not effecting of a change in something with independent existence.

7. Divine transcendence and immanence.

- a. As the cause of being, God both transcends all of creation and is immanently present in it. These two characteristics are not opposed. As the source of creaturely existence, God must be immanently present in creation. Nothing is more intimate to any being than its own existence, and God is present to each creature as the source of its being. God is in all things, and innermost. God's presence in each thing means so is His action.
- b. The total otherness of God explains that He is not present and operative in any one place but simultaneously in all places given them their very powers of being.

- c. God's presence in the world does not imply that God is identical with the world (pantheism).
- d. Nor does it mean that God is a part of the world or that the world is part of God (panentheism). God is not "present in things in the sense of being combined with them as one of their parts." Panentheism is pervasive in the science/theology dialogue on divine action.

- e. Panentheism is the belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him, but that His being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe.
- f. Panentheism is often presented as an alternative to deism (transcendence to the exclusion of immanence) or pantheism (immanence to the exclusion of transcendence) and is frequently contrasted with traditional theism.
- g. However, panenthism collapses into pantheism when God's being and creature's beings are viewed univocally. All univocal predication leads to pantheism because both are viewed the same—cf., water in a cup vss. water in a picture. God and creatures are not univocal in being.

- h. As the source of being in creatures, God is beyond the whole order of creaturely reality. This means that the relationship between God and creatures must be quite different from that of one creature to another.
- i. The difference is not that God is more distant from creatures than they are from one another, but infinitely closer. God neither depends on creatures nor belongs to the same order of being. However, all creatures utterly depend upon Him for their very existence.
- j. Creatures activity is an incidental aspect of its being. God's action is one with His being. When one creature acts on another, it is incidentally present to the other. When God acts on or in a creature, God is substantially present.

Classical theism vs. neo-theism (personal theism).

1. Classical theism (undergirded by classical metaphysics) was the standard from the Fathers, the Middle Ages, through the Roman Church, and into the Reformation (1517).
2. Following the Reformation, there was a rejection of classical metaphysics by Bible and doctrinal movements, which caused the church to move into neo-theism. This not only changed the way Christians viewed God, but the entire focus of the Christian life (problem solving, power systems, growth by programs, very anthropocentric). We must do all we can to reclaim classical Christianity.

3. A look at Neo-theism (personal theism).
 - a. While many Bible and doctrinal movements that grew out of denominations were properly motivated in rejecting theological liberalism, its rejection classical metaphysics doomed it to the naturalism of Kant and Saussure, where churches build their own systems (Kant) and use language to indoctrinate their communities.
 - b. Finis Dake illustrates what happens when one rejects classical realism and attempts a Bible-only approach to language. His study Bible is hailed by Bible believers as one of the greatest study Bibles in all the modern world. He rejects all philosophy and just seeks meanings in the plain words of Scripture (same hermeneutics espoused by Ryrie and DTS).

- c. Finis Dake: *“Remember this: Take the Bible literally wherever it is at all possible. When the language cannot be taken literally, then we know it is figurative. Then get the literal truth conveyed by the figurative language as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of figures.”*

- d. Finis Dake on John 4:24: *“God is a Spirit Being, not the sun, moon, stars; nor an image of wood, stone, or metal; and not beast or man. He is not the air, wind, universal mind, love or some impersonal quality. He is a person a personal spirit body, a personal soul, and a personal spirit, like that of angels, and like that of man except His body is a spirit substance instead of flesh and bones (Job 13:8; Heb. 1:3).*

- e. Finis Dake, “God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, each angel and man, and every separate person in the universe has a personal body, soul, and spirit, which are separate and distinct from all others . . .”
- f. Finis Dake on Ex. 33, “Verse 11 says that ‘the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh with a friend.’ This proves that Moses saw God with the eyes,
- g. Psalm 11:4 The LORD *is* in His holy temple, The LORD'S throne *is* in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

- h. Isaiah 65:5 Who say, 'Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you!' These *are* smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day.
- i. Job 4:9 "By the breath of God they perish, And by the blast of His anger they come to an end.
- j. Genesis 6:6 The LORD repented that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

- k. The intractable problem in neo-theism is in its commitment to ontological univocism, which translates into thinking that man and God are of the same kind of beings, the only difference is that God is of a greater instance of the same sort of existence and attributes found in creatures.
- l. Given this outlook, it is no wonder that the simplicity of God appears incoherent to many modern philosophers and theologians.
- m. With a univocal perspective, God could no more be identical with His existence and attributes any creature could be really identical with its existence and attributes.

4. Classical theism. This has been the dominant position throughout church history. God's being is the ground of all beings.
 - a. Though creatures bear the image of God's existence and attributes, their similarity to God is better understood as analogical rather than univocal (or equivocal)
 - b. The manner in which God exists and possesses attributes is so radically unlike anything found in creature that He cannot be classified together with them in a single order of being or as the highest link on a great chain of being.
 - c. As the one who ultimately accounts for being in general, as its first and final cause, God does not stand within that general ontological order.

- d. The correct view, according to classical theism, is that the language used of God is analogical—not univocal or equivocal.
- e. The analogy of being. We are human beings and God is the Supreme Being. The difference between the supreme being and the human being is being. We do not have the power of being in and of ourselves. I do not have necessary being as a creature. Only supreme being has that. Human beings are dependent, derived, contingent, dependent on something that does have eternal being.

- f. Even though I am not the supreme being, I am a human being and so there is some analogy of being that exists between God and us.
- g. The Bible talks about us created in the image of God. So there is some point of similarity. This becomes absolutely vital whether there can be any meaningful statement can be made about God by creatures such as us. If there is no similarity then there would be no grounds for meaningful discussion about Him.
- h. Analogical predication, enables us to bring together a way of thinking and speaking about divine unity and trinity 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.

i. Passages that support the classical view of God.

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

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

1 Tim. 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.

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, `I AM has sent me to you.'"

Malachi 3:6 "For I *am* the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning

1. In order to understand how divine simplicity accounts for God's absoluteness, it is necessary to consider exactly what simplicity means.
 - a. The doctrine of divine simplicity is that there are no physical or metaphysical parts in God.
 - b. Non-composition must characterize God inasmuch as every composite is a dependent thing that cannot account for its own existence or essence and stands in need of some composer outside of itself.
 - c. To be composite is to be composed by another and to be dependent upon part that enter into composition. Furthermore, composition signifies the capacity of a thing to change or even be annihilated.
 - d. If God is to be understood as "most absolute" all such composition must be denied of Him.
 - e. Nothing composite can be the reason for its own composition.
 - f. God's simplicity is the heart of the Creator-creature distinction.

2. All physical reality outside God is essentially of mixture of becoming and being, of potential and actual. This is true whether we are examining the constitution of physical or of metaphysical being.
3. Act and potency illustrated: things go out of existence and others come into being, and existing things lose characteristics and take on new ones. Reality is, as it were, constantly in a state of being carved up in new and different ways. The only explanation for the fact that reality is able to take on new kinds of existence, is that some principle of potentiality inherent in reality.

4. So potency in a thing accounts for its ability to exist, become, and change while act is that by which the existence or change is brought about. An acorn has the potency to become an oak tree, and egg has the potent to become a chicken. No potency perfects itself or gives itself actuality. Potency comes from act. Potency is capacity that is unrealized, so it is lack of perfection.

5. We have the potential to understand the simplicity of God. In act we may only understand God as *Esse*. We respect to *Esse* of Exodus 3:14 we are in act but we are in potency with regard to a fuller understanding of *Esse*.