

Session 1: An Introduction to Classical Theism and Confessional Unity

“Printed for Benjamin Harris, and sold at his shop at the Stationers Arms in Sweetings Rents, in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange.”

“to manifest our consent with both, in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion.”

“we have no itch to clog religion with new words.”

“we do readily acquiesce in that form of sound words, which has been, in consent with the Holy Scriptures, used by others before us.”

Question: Why is there such a thing as classical theism, and why should we expect it to be so?

I. A Covenantal and Common Foundation

Jeremiah 31:34

John 14:25-26

1 John 1:1-4

1 John 2:20-26

II. A Committed and Coherent Foundation

2 Timothy 2:1-2

III. A Credal and Confessional Foundation

What do you do with your most prized possessions? Where do you keep them?

Is our Confession in this tradition?

So what?

1. Speak the language of the church
2. Know your own Confession
3. Know the history of doctrine
4. Take errors seriously
5. Test all things by Scripture

Session 5: The Holy Trinity: One God in Three Subsistences

I. The Biblical Source of the Language of Subsistence

Hebrews 1:1-3a “*χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*” (the character of his hypostasis)

Hypostasis:

1. The substance or essence of a thing
2. Something that exists in itself, an individual existent

Thomas Manton said, “Christ is called ‘The express image of his Person’: It cannot be rendered Essence, but Subsistence; for then *Arius* would have carried the day, and Christ would be only *homoiousios* [a similar substance]. And the Father’s essence cannot properly be said to be impressed on the Son, since the very same individual essence and substance was wholly in him, as it was wholly in the Father; and the Son cannot be said to be like: but now *the express image of his subsistence*, or, as we now render it, *Person*, doth provide for the consubstantiality of the Son, against Arius; and for the distinction of the subsistences, against *Sabellius*.”

II. The Historical Use of the Language of Subsistence

Greek-speaking Church: God is one *ousia* [being], and three *hypostases* [distinct subsistences].

Are the Father and Son *homoiousios* (similar substances) or *homoousios* (of the same substance)?

The Nicene Creed: “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; *of the same essence as the Father*.”

Latin-speaking Church: God is one *substance*, and three *subsistences* (or “persons”).

III. The Precision and Utility of the term Subsistence

1. *Abstract vs. Concrete Subsistence*

Abstract: a substance’s self-existence

Concrete: an individual substance in actual existence

2. *Irrational vs. Rational Substances*

Irrational: no intellect

Rational: a *person*, an individual substance of a rational nature

3. *Created vs. Incrated Persons*

Thomas Manton: A divine person is [1] a substance (not an accident or attribute), [2] a particular substance (not general, nature), [3] living (not a book), [4] rational (not a tree), [5] not part but complete whole (not human nature, or soul).

IV. Subsistence and Simplicity

1. *“Who is not to be divided in nature and being”*

Nature: Humanity (Deity)

Being: A human (a god?)

2. *The Real Modal Distinction of the Essence and Persons*

Essence and Person: the distinction between a thing, and the manner, or relation of that same thing.

Person and Person: the distinction between a relation and a relation of the same thing, or a manner and a manner of the same thing.

Real, rational, or modal?

Real: an apple and an apple

Rational: the right and left side of a column

Modal: a thing and the manner or mode of the same thing

John Norton said, “When we sometimes read in authors that a person is distinguished really from the essence, we are to understand ‘really’ not strictly, and properly, but in a large sense; namely, as opposed to a distinction of reason. And it is as much as if they should say, ‘The distinction between a person and the essence is founded in the divine nature, and not in our reason, or conception; having its true existence, whether we think of it, or not.’”

Hey man, want some modalism? No. Not even once.

Modalism makes the threeness of God merely an outward manner of revealing. Orthodox trinitarianism acknowledges that God’s threeness is a modal distinction, but it is the very being of God and not simply an outward appearance of threeness (masks) shown to man.

Session 6: Eternal Relations and Relative Properties in the Godhead

I. Five Notions

1. *Primacy, (Innascibility, Unbegottenness)*
2. *Paternity (Generation)*
3. *Filiation*
4. *Spiration*
5. *Procession*

II. Four Relations (*ad intra* personal acts)

1. *Paternity (Generation)*
2. *Filiation*
3. *Spiration*
4. *Procession*

III. Three Relative Properties (incommunicable)

1. *Paternity (Generation)*
2. *Filiation*
3. *Procession*

IV. Two Processions (two “of’s”)

1. *Filiation*
2. *Procession*

V. One God

VI. Trinity and Subordination

Do the relations and relative properties constitute a subordination in the godhead?

1. *Analogies with human relationships*
2. *Analogies based on human generation*

“Each one having the whole essence, yet the essence undivided.”

To be God *in se* vs. *de se*

Does the [Divine Person] have the whole divine essence? (*in se*)

In what manner does the [Divine Person] have the whole divine essence? (*de se*)

Is there a *taxis*, or order? Yes.

Is there a suborder or hierarchy? No. Not even once.