

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”, Message # 53 – “In God, 3 Subsistences”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall, On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

**Paragraph 3** – In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, d) the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, e) yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is f) eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit g) proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.

d) 1<sup>st</sup> John 5: 7; Matthew 28: 19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13: 14; e) Exodus 3: 14; John 14: 11;  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:6; f)John 1:14,18; g)John 15:26; Gal 4: 6)

### **1. Where in the Bible do we find the Divine Trinity mentioned?**

We do not find the word “Trinity” mentioned anywhere in the Bible, but the 3 Persons subsisting in the Divine Essence are mentioned in a number of places.

For instance –

**Matthew 28: 19 and 20** – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Here we see very clearly laid out for us 3 Divine Persons in one Essence, and the Divine Persons are all mentioned as having the same name; that is, the Name of God. “In the name”, the One Essence, of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Each of these Divine Persons and all of them together have given Christ’s Church this command. Even though the command was given by the Son to His disciples, yet He, the Son, is speaking for the other 2 Persons who are “of” the same Name. These Persons exist together in the Divine Essence; they subsist there as distinct Persons in the Divine Essence.

### **2. Let’s Define some of the Important Terms.**

**The Term “Essence”** – Zacharias Ursinus says that the term “Essence” “is taken from the Greek Ουσια and it signifies – A Thing subsisting by itself – Not sustained by another, although it may be communicated to more.” “By the term Essence, we are to understand, in reference to this subject, that which the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are considered, and declared to be, singly and absolutely in themselves, and which is common to the Three.” “The Essence is “the very Being of God – the very, Eternal, and only Deity.”

**The Term “Person”** – Zacharias Ursinus also says that Person “is that which subsists, is individual, living, intelligent, incommunicable, not sustained in another, nor part of another.”

“Person refers to the mode or manner in which the Being of God, or the Divine Essence, subsists in each of the three. ( I take it, that for a Divine Person to subsist in the Divine Essence means that each Person has distinct Personal identity with distinct relative Properties which distinguish them from one another, while at the same time they exist united together, having but one Essence.)

**Ursinus says again** – “God the Father is that Being who is of Himself, and not from another.” “The Son is that self-same Being, or essence, not of Himself, but of the Father.” “The Holy Spirit is in like manner the self-same Being, not of Himself, but from the Father and the Son.”

**He further says** – “This distinction of Essence and Person is, therefore, to be observed, that the unity of the true God may not be impaired, or the distinction of the Person be taken away, or something else be understood by the term Person, than the truth which God’s word declares.”

“Trinity, from the Greek τριας, signifies these Three Persons, distinct in three modes of Being, or existing in one Essence of the Deity.”

**The word Hypostasis is used for Person; it has reference to Divine Personhood.**

**Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 3** – “Who being the brightness of His glory (ος ων απαυγασμα της δοξης) and the express image of His person (και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτου), and upholding (φερων) all things by the word of His power (τε τα παντα τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου), when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

“Who being the express image of His Person.” (της υποστασεως αυτου φερων) “And the exact representation of His nature.” (That is, the exact representation of the Father’s Essence.)

**In the Greek, verse 3 reads this way** – ος ων απαυγασμα της δοξης και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτου φερων τε τα παντα τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου δι εαυτου καθαρισμον ποιησαμενος των αμαρτιων ημων εκαθισεν εν δεξια της μεγαλωσυνης εν υψηλοις

**Lewis Bayly in his book The Practice of Piety says** – “In the Divine Essence we are to consider two things: First, the diverse manner of Being therein; secondly, the Attributes thereof.” “The diverse manner of Being therein, are called Persons.” “A Person is a distinct subsistence of the whole Godhead.”

**John 1: 1** – “In the Beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “He was in the Beginning with God.”

**Bayly says** - “There are Three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” “These three Persons are not three several substances, but three distinct subsistences; or three diverse manner of Beings, of one and the same substance and divine essence.” “So that a Person in the Godhead is an individual Understanding and Incommunicable subsistence, living of itself, and not sustained by another.” “In the Unity of the Godhead there is plurality which is not accidental, for God is a most Pure Act, and admits no accidents; nor essential, for God is one Essence only – but Personal.”

**3. The Divine Essence in Itself is neither divided nor distinguished, but the three Persons in the Divine Essence are distinguished amongst themselves three manner of ways:**

**A. By their Names**

**1. By their Names, thus:**

**The first Person is named the Father;** first of all, in respect of His natural son, Christ (Mat. xi. 27; iii. 17;) secondly, in respect of the elect, His adopted sons (Isa. lxiii. 16; Eph. iii. 14, 15;) that is, those who, being not his sons by nature, are made his sons by grace.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Person is named the Son,** because he is begotten of his Father's substance, or nature (Prov. xxx. 4; Psalm. ii. 7; Heb. i. 3; Phil. ii. 6;) and he is called the Word—First, because the conception of a word in man's mind is the nearest thing that, in some sort, can shadow to us the manner how he is eternally begotten of his Father's substance; and in this respect he is also called the Wisdom of his Father (Prov. viii. 12.) Secondly, because that by him the Father has from the beginning declared his will for our salvation (John i. 18); hence he is called λόγος quasi λέγων, the person speaking with or by the Father. Thirdly, because he is the chief argument of all the word of God (Acts x. 43; Heb. i. 1; Luke xxiv. 27; John v. 45; Acts iii. 22, 23, 24), or that Word whereof God spake when he promised the blessed seed to the fathers under the Old Testament.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Person is named the Holy Ghost** (Isa. lxiii. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 14)—First, because He is spiritual, without a body (1 John iv. 13; 2 Cor. iii. 17.) Secondly, because he is spired, and as it were breathed from both the Father and the Son (John xx. 21, 22; Gal. iv. 6), that is, proceedeth from them both; and he is called Holy, both because he is holy in his own nature (1 Pet. i. 15, 16), and also the immediate sanctifier of all God's elect people (2 Cor. iii. 18; 1 Thess. v. 23; 1 Pet. i. 2.)

**2. By Their Order, thus:**

“The Persons of the Godhead are either the Father, or those which are of the Father.

**The Father is the first Person (Mat. xxviii. 19; 1 John v. 7) in the glorious Trinity,** having neither his Being nor beginning of any other but of himself; begetting his Son, and together with his Son sending forth the Holy Ghost from everlasting. The persons which are of the Father are those who, in respect of their personal existence, have the whole divine essence eternally communicated unto them from the Father. And those are either from the Father alone, as the Son; or from the Father and the Son.

**The Son is the second Person of the glorious Trinity,** and the only begotten Son of his Father, not by grace, but by nature; having his being of the Father alone, and the whole being of his Father by an eternal and incomprehensible generation; and with the Father sendeth forth the Holy Ghost.” “In respect of His absolute essence, He is of himself; but in respect of his Person He is, by an eternal generation, of his Father. For the essence doth not beget an essence, but the person of the Father begetteth the person of the Son, and so he is God of God, and hath from his Father the beginning of his person and order, but not of essence and time.

**The Holy Ghost is the third Person of the blessed Trinity**, proceeding and sent forth equally from both the Father and the Son (John xv. 26; xvi. 15)<sup>12</sup> by an eternal and incomprehensible spiration. For as the Son receiveth the whole divine essence by generation, so the Holy Ghost receiveth it wholly by spiration. This order betwixt the three persons appears in that the Father begetting must in order be before the Son begotten; and the Father and Son, before the Holy Ghost proceeding from both.”

### **This order serves to set forth to us two things—**

First, the manner how the Trinity worketh in their external actions; as, that the Father worketh of himself, by the Son and the Holy Ghost; the Son from the Father by the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son.

Secondly, to distinguish the first and immediate beginning from which those external and common actions flow. Hence it is, that forasmuch as the Father is the fountain and original of the Trinity, the beginning of all external working, the name of God in relation, and the title of Creator in the creed, are given in a special manner to the Father; our redemption to the Son, and our sanctification to the person of the Holy Ghost, as the immediate agents of those actions. And this also is the cause why the Son, as he is mediator, referreth all things to the Father, not to the Holy Ghost (Matt. xi. 25, 26, 27; John v. 19–23; xi. 41, 42; xii. 49), and that the Scripture so often saith that we are reconciled to the Father (2 Cor. v. 18, &c.) This divine order or economy excepted, there is neither first nor last, neither superiority nor inferiority, among the three persons; but for nature they are co-essential, for dignity co-equal, for time co-eternal.

### **3. The Actions by which the Three Persons are distinguished.**

Bayly, Lewis. *The Practice of Piety - Enhanced Version*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Kindle Edition.

### **John Gill says this in his Body of Divinity –**

God is true in his works; or all his works are true, and his veracity is displayed in them; and these are either internal or external.

**1. Internal acts within himself;** some relative to himself, to the divine persons, their modes of subsisting, and distinction from each other; as paternity, filiation, and spiration; which are true and real things: the Father is truly and properly the Father of Christ, and not in name only; and Christ is his own proper Son, not in a figurative sense, or by office, as magistrates are called the children of the most High; but the Son of the Father “in truth” and love, 2 John 1:3 and the Spirit of truth is really breathed, and proceeds from the Father and the Son, John 15:26 others are relative to creatures; the decrees of God within himself, which are the secret actings and workings of his mind, the thoughts of his heart, the deep things of God, his counsels of old, which are “faithfulness” and “truth”; truly made, and truly performed, Isaiah 25:1.

**2. External works,** as the works of creation, providence, and grace, which are all true, and real things; and in which the veracity of God appears, both in making and in continuing them.

