

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”, Message # 56 – “Divine Persons Distinguished”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall, on November 29th, 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) 1st John 5: 7; Matthew 28: 19; 2nd Corinthians 13: 14; e) Exodus 3: 14; John 14: 11;

1st Corinthians 8:6; f)John 1:14,18; g)John 15:26; Gal 4: 6

We have been studying the Doctrine of God in some depth by looking together at the Divine Simplicity first; seeing that God is One in Essence and Being, without any parts. He is infinitely wise and holy; has existed from all eternity past, without beginning, and standing outside of time, He is eternal. And, I have further declared to you that which the Scriptures plainly declare, that in this One Divine Being there are 3 subsistences, or Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each having the whole Divine Essence, even as our Confession states, and yet the Essence is undivided. And so, for the past several sessions, we have begun to think together about the several peculiar relative properties and personal relations which exist between the three Persons in the Divine Trinity.

Scott R. Swain in his fine little book, *The Trinity: An Introduction*, says this:

“In previous chapters we had opportunity to consider a distinction fundamental to the Bible’s basic Trinitarian grammar, the distinction between “common predication” and “proper predication”. Common predication refers to what the three Persons hold in common as the one and simple God: they share the one holy name YHWH, one divine being, one divine wisdom, one divine goodness, and one divine power.” “In contrast to common predication, proper predication refers to what each Person of the Trinity holds in distinction from the other two persons.” “The personal properties of Paternity, Filiation, and Spiration identify that which foundationally and fundamentally distinguishes the Persons of the Trinity: the Father begets the son (Paternity), the Son is eternally begotten of the Father (filiation), and the Father and the Son eternally breathe forth the Spirit.” (spiration)

We can go on from here, using Scott Swain’s distinction of common and proper predication, and use it in relation to Lewis Bayly’s definition of these things in his book, *The Practice of Piety*, P. 4, that – **“The Divine Essence in Itself is neither divided nor distinguished, (which is common predication) but the three Persons in the Divine Essence are distinguished amongst themselves in three manner of ways” (this is proper predication): 1st – By their Names, 2nd – By their Order, and 3rd – By their Internal and External Acts.**

I. By their Names

A. The first Person is named the Father;

1st of all, in respect of His natural son, Christ

Matthew 11: 25-27 – “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’ “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (This is Common Predication and Proper Predication seen together in these verses.)

Scott Swain says on P. 40 – “Several features of this passage are worth noting.” “First, Jesus identifies the ‘Lord of heaven and earth’ as His “Father”, and He identifies Himself as the Father’s Son.” “To recall our earlier labels, this is an example of “Proper Predication” – that is, predication that distinguishes one Person of the Trinity from another Person of the Trinity.” “Second, Jesus claims that the authority that belongs to His Father as Lord of heaven and earth also belongs to Him because the Father has granted to to Him.” “Again, to recall our earlier label, this is an example of “Common Predication” – That is, predication that identifies what the Persons of the Trinity hold in common as the one God.”

Scott Swain says on P. 68 – “The basic grammar can be further sharpened and clarified in light of the Bible’s threefold name of the Father.” “As we saw above, the Bible calls God Father both to describe relations that are internal to the Trinity, and thus identical with the one God’s life, and to describe relations that are external to the Trinity and thus not identical with the one God’s life.” “The Father’s relation to the Son is internal to the one God, and both the Father and the Son are identical with the one God.” “The Father’s relation to to creation as a whole, in general, and to His redeemed people in particular, is not internal to the one God’s life nor are any of God’s creatures identical with the one God.” “God could and would be Father apart from creating or redeeming us.” “And for all the intimacy we enjoy with the Triune God as His redeemed children, we will always remain creatures.”

The 1st Person is named the Father, 2^{ndly}, 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. (this too, is Common Predication)

We could also add that God is called “Father” in relation to all creation and all the men that He has made. (Malachi 2: 10) “Have we not all one Father?” “Has not one God created us?”

Scott Swain says again on P. 68 – “How does the Bible’s threefold way of naming God the Father further clarify the distinction between common and proper naming? When the Bible calls God the Father of His beloved Son, it engages in Proper Predication. In this application, the Father is exclusively predicated of the First Person of the Trinity.” “The Father alone eternally begets the Son.” “However, when the Bible calls God the Father of all creatures or the Father of His redeemed children children, it engages in common predication.