

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”, Message #47 – “God’s Divine Unity & Simplicity”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall, on August 30th, 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)

Having gone through the first two paragraphs of Chapter 2 in 46 messages, back in 2016 and 2107, I thought that it would be good for us as a church to go back now, and to attempt to open up more of these blessed truths about God’s great Being together, by our taking a trip slowly through Paragraph 3. I want to speak to you about the Divine Trinity having 3 Persons or subsistences, but I want to set the stage for that by first speaking about God’s Simplicity today; that glorious truth that our God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are One God. They are, as Divine Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity. Each Person has the whole Divine essence, and that essence is undivided. All that is in God is God. But the principle claim of Divine Simplicity is that God is not composed of parts. God is simple because He is One. There is a Unity in God in His essence which must be recognized by all true Christians.

The Belgic Confession’s Definition of Divine Simplicity

Article 1 – “We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is one only simple and spiritual Being which we call God; and that He is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good and the overflowing fountain of all good.”

1st – Where do we find Divine Simplicity or the Doctrine of God’s Unity in the Bible?

Deuteronomy 6: 4 – “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” In other words, Divine Unity and Simplicity are the same thing in theology. Our God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are not three gods, but they are one God existing in three subsistences. “Here in this verse the word “God is plural, in the original Hebrew; but the whole passage contains the most plain (unequivocal) declaration of the unity of God.” (J.L. Dagg, Manual of Theology, P. 56)

1st Corinthians 8: 4-6 – “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.” “For even if there

are so called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many Lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” Here we see that the Father and the Son are both God, and of the same exact nature and essence in their Being.

Now, lest you think that the Lord Jesus Christ is not God, you must see that the Scriptures teach here in this place that He is God; for all things were made by the Father through Him, and it is through Him that we have both our physical and spiritual life. But they are one God, and they are not compounded in their essence. There is a Divine Simplicity in God who subsists in three Persons. But the Divine Trinity is not God in three parts. He is one God in 3 Blessed Persons.

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.”

Notice here how the Lord, the King of Israel, that is, the Father, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, our Lord Jesus Christ, are one Lord God. They are mentioned in their Divine Unity, thus proving the simplicity of God.

Isaiah 44: 8 – “Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time and declared it?” “You are My witnesses.” “Is there a God besides me?” “Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.”

We live in a day when all the world outside of Christ declares and wants to put forth the idea that there are many gods and all are equally valid in their claim to be God, but we must not fear them, nor be afraid of their strong assertions. God has declared it in His word and made us His witnesses to the exclusivity of His Being. Is there a God besides God? No. And in order to prove that the Father and the Son are one God, He calls Himself the Rock.

When you turn over to **1st Corinthians chapter 10, verses 1-4**, you find this truth of God’s being our Rock applied to more Divine Persons of the Trinity than the Father, because there is a unity in the Godhead. Paul says – “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.” “For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

Deuteronomy 32: 1-4 – “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.” “Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass.” “For I proclaim the name of the Lord.: Ascribe greatness to our God.” “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.”

Notice how when God proclaims His own name, He does not refer to Himself as the Rocks, plural, but the Rock singular. God is great because He is simple, because He is one God. There is not other like Him, none to compare with Him, and all of His work is perfect.

Applications – 1. It is very important, in our witness to the truth of God and the Bible, to declare to people around us that our God is One God and that He has most definitively declared Himself to be so, so that nobody will be mistaken about it. The Doctrine of the Unity of the Divine Being is essential to our worship and to all true worship because our God is the only true

and living God, and thus He alone is worthy of our worship. The 1st and 2nd commandments of God's law forbid having other gods, and therefore we cannot recognize the gods of the other religions of the world as being legitimate. Let us not, in the name of love, peace, or acceptance, affirm them, but declare that worship belongs only to our God of the Bible; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. When we address God in Prayer, our understanding that God is simple, that He is One, helps us to understand why we can legitimately address each of the Persons of the Godhead with worship and adoration knowing that they are One in Essence and Being, and that when we address the Father, we know that we are also addressing the Son, and in addressing the Son, we are also addressing the Father and the Spirit, and in addressing the Spirit, we are most certainly not leaving out the Father and the Son.

3. The exercise of our faith, our hope, and our love are focused upon the Lord our God as being one God. All of our worship and service of our God, have as their focus, our one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, being seen together by us, in Essence as one God. Each Person of the Divine Trinity is, together with the others, is seen as the object of our devotion.

Jeremiah 17: 7 – “Blessed is the man who trust in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.”

Psalms 73: 25 – “Whom have I in heaven but You?” “And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.”

2nd – The Doctrine of Simplicity as looked at theologically

A. Just because our God is a Triune God, it does not mean that He is composed of parts.

(Taken from James Dolezal's book, *All that is In God*.)

P. 40 and 41 of Dolezal's book – “Whatever is composed of parts depends upon its parts, in order to be as it is.” “A part is anything in a subject that is less than the whole and without which the subject would be really different than it is.” “In short, composite beings need their parts in order to exist as they do.” “If God should be composed of parts – of components that were prior to Him in being – He would be doubly dependent: first, on the parts, and second, on the composer of the parts.” “But God is absolute in Being, alone the sufficient reason for Himself and all other things, and so cannot in any respect derive His being from another.”

B. – We cannot comprehend the simplicity of God since we ourselves are creatures made up of parts.

Wilhelmus A'Brakel says – “...All composition implies imperfection, dependency, and divisibility, and so we may not think of God as being composite even in the remotest sense of the word.” “Thus we acknowledge God in every respect to be perfect and of singular essence.”

He also says – “In every created person there is a composition of essence, actual existence, and manner of existence.” “One is not the same as the other, but is distinguished from the other.” “Consider, for instance the human nature of Christ, in which we can discern both essence and actual existence, but not a human personality.” “As such it has its existence within the Son of God, for otherwise Christ would consist of two persons: a human and divine person.” “He is, however, one divine Person.” “In God there is no composition and personhood, as every form of composition implies imperfection.” “Each Divine Person is not to be distinguished from either the Divine Being or from the other Persons as we would distinguish between various matters, nor as between a matter and the manner in which it functions, such being distinct from the

matter itself.” “We insignificant human beings, however, try to comprehend this by relating to or defining a manner of existence.” “this does not indicate that there is composition in His Being, but merely enable us to distinguish between various matters related to God’s Being.” “Whatever we cannot comprehend of it, we believe and worship, as it pleases God to reveal Himself in such a fashion.” “Believers, being illuminated by the Spirit of God, know as much concerning this attribute as is necessary to cause them to adore and glorify God, as well as to experience joy, confidence and sanctification.”

C. – If all that is in God is God, and He is Simple, then each of His Attributes is identical with His Essence.

1st John 1: 5 – “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

It is true that God is in His essential Being Light. He is a most pure Being, radiant in His glory, shining forth in all His glorious Attributes, the glory of His Wisdom, Power, and Knowledge. But each of these Attributes are identical with His essence, not separate components or parts of His essence.

James Dolezal says on P. 43 of his book, *All that is in God* – “God’s essence is not simply a bundle of contiguous properties or attributes, each existing alongside the others as an integrated whole.’ “His divinity is not a sublime set of great-making properties all splendidly arranged together in Him.” “In His essence, it is not one thing to be good, another to be wise, another to be powerful, and so on.” “Rather, the reality in virtue of which all these things are truly said God is nothing but His own simple Divinity.” “Properly speaking, God is good by virtue of God, not goodness.” “He is wise by virtue of God, not wisdom.” “He is powerful by virtue of God, not power.” “He is love by virtue of God, not love.” “And when we say that God is goodness itself, we do not mean that these are so many really distinct parts or forms in God, but simply that He is all that is involved in these terms by virtue of His own divine essence as such.” “God is not the particular instantiation of a wonderful set of properties.” “Rather there is nothing in God that is not identical with His Divinity, nothing that is not just God Himself.”

Let me close by giving you this quote from Stephen Charnock work – The Existence and Attributes of God.

He says – “If God were not a pure Spirit, he could not be one. If God had a body, consisting of distinct members, as ours ; or all of one nature, as the water and air are, yet he were then capable of division, and therefore could not be entirely one. Either those parts would be finite or infinite: if finite, they are not parts of God; for to be God and finite is a contradiction ; if infinite, then there are as many infinite as distinct members, and therefore as many Deities. Suppose this body had all parts of the same nature, as air and water hath, every little part of air is as much air as the greatest, and every little part of water is as much water as the ocean ; so every little part of God would be as much God as the whole ; as many particular Deities to make up God, as little atoms to compose a body. What can be more absurd ? If God had a body like a human body, and were compounded of body and soul, of substance and quality, he could not be the most perfect unity he would be made up of distinct parts, and those of a distinct nature, as the members of a human body are. Where there is the greatest unity, there must be the greatest simplicity ; but God is one. As he is free from any change, so he is void of any multitude (Deut. vi. 4) : * The Lord our God is one Lord.”

