

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,
Message # 5 – “A Most Pure Spirit”, Presented in the Adult Sunday
School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 4th, 2016.**

Chapter 2 – Of God and the Holy Trinity, Paragraph 1 -

The Lord our God is but (a)one only living and true God; whose (b)subsistence is in and of Himself, (c)infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; (d)a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is (f)immutable, (g)immense, (h)eternal, incomprehensible, (i)almighty, every way infinite, (k)most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; (l)working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, (m)for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; (n)the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just (o)and terrible in his judgments, (p)hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q)guilty.

This morning we want to examine the idea that God is a most pure spirit. This is referring to two things; that God in His Being, in His essence, is spirit; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is, as our Confession says, “invisible, without body, parts, or passions. And 2nd, it means that a God is a perfectly pure spirit. And this refers to His perfect righteousness and holiness of Being; that nothing can defile Him or affect Him because He is Perfect Purity in Being; even the Essence of Purity. As our Confession states: He alone has immortality, and He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states in Question 4 – “What is God?” “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

Question 5 states: Are there more Gods than one ?

Answer: There is but One only, the living and true God.

1. God is Spirit -

John 4: 20-24 – “The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.” “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.’ “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The truth that should make its definite impression upon us from these words is this: God would have all who would worship Him to realize that He is spirit; He is not in any way to be worshiped through His creation; He is an immaterial being. He cannot be worshiped through, or in relation to, objects or pictures of man’s devising, or thought of as residing in His whole essence like a man, in a certain place, like Mt. Gerizim or in Jerusalem. He is seeking persons to worship Him who will be willing to submit to His revelation of Himself which is found in the Scriptures,

and their having a spirit which has been changed by grace so that their heart goes out to Him in the right way; not some carnal, earthly, or false way which is devised by man.

John Gill on John 4: 24 – “God is a spirit,... Or “the Spirit is God”; a divine person, possessed of all divine perfections, as appears from his names, works, and worship ascribed unto him; though the Arabic and Persic versions, and others, read as we do, “God is a spirit”; that is, God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: for taking the words in this light, not one of the persons is to be understood exclusive of the other; for this description, or definition, agrees with each of them, and they are all the object of worship, and to be worshipped in a true and spiritual manner. God is a spirit, and not a body, or a corporeal substance: the nature and essence of God is like a spirit, simple and uncompounded, not made up of parts; nor is it divisible; nor does it admit of any change and alteration. God, as a spirit, is immaterial, immortal, invisible, and an intelligent, willing, and active being; but differs from other spirits, in that he is not created, but an immense and infinite spirit, and an eternal one, which has neither beginning nor end: he is therefore a spirit by way of eminency, as well as effectively, he being the author and former of all spirits: whatever excellence is in them, must be ascribed to God in the highest manner; and whatever is imperfect in them, must be removed from him: and they that worship him; worship is due to him on account of his nature and perfections, both internal and external; with both the bodies and souls of men; and both private and public; in the closet, in the family, and in the church of God; as prayer, praise, attendance on the word and ordinances:

must worship him in spirit and in truth; in the true and spiritual manner before described, which is suitable to his nature, and agreeably to his will.

2. God is a pure Spirit.

a. The purity of God’s being invisible -

W.G.T. Shedd – “In saying that God, as a pure spirit, that He is “without body, parts or passions,” a definite conception is conveyed to us, by which spirit and matter are sharply distinguished. Matter may have bodily form, be divisible, and capable of passions that is, of being wrought upon by other pieces of ponderable matter. None of these characteristics can belong to God, or to any spirit whatever.”

Idolatry conceives of the deity as a form, and the Hebrews were warned against the error. It is difficult for man, in his present condition, to think of substance, and yet not think of figure or parts.”

Manichaeism -

1. The syncretic, dualistic religious philosophy taught by the Persian prophet Mani, combining elements of Zoroastrian, Christian, and Gnostic thought and opposed by the imperial Roman government, Neo-Platonist philosophers, and by orthodox Christians.

2. A dualistic philosophy dividing the world between good and evil principles or regarding matter as intrinsically evil and mind as intrinsically good.

Augustine (Confessions, VII. i.) describes his own perplexity, when renouncing Manichaeism, in the following manner. “Though not under the form of the human body, yet was I constrained to conceive of Thee as being in space, either infused into the world, or diffused infinitely outside of it.” “Because, whatsoever I conceived of as deprived of this space seemed to me nothing, yea,

altogether nothing, not even a void; as, if a body were taken out of its place, and the place should remain empty of any body at all, yet would it remain a void place, as it were a spacious nothing.”

In Confessions, V. xiv., he says, “Could I once have conceived of a spiritual substance, all the strongholds of the Manichaeans would have been beaten down and cast utterly out of mind. But I could not.” But that it is possible to think of unextended substance, is proved by the fact that we think of the human soul as without figure and parts, and yet as a real entity. In truth, it is easier to think of the reality and continued existence of the soul after death, than of the body. The body, as to its visible substance, is dissolved into dust, and blown to the four winds, and taken up into other forms of matter. But the soul being indissoluble and indivisible, has a subsistence of its own apart from and independent of the body. It is easier to realize and believe in, the present actual existence of the spiritual part of Alexander the Great, than of the material part of him. That the soul of Alexander the Great is this instant existing, and existing consciously, is not so difficult to believe, as it is to believe that his body is still existing. It is easier to answer the question, Where is the soul of a man who died a thousand years ago? than to answer the question, Where is the body of a man who died a thousand years ago? “The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it,” Ecclesiastes 12.7.

Deuteronomy 4: 15-20 – “Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.”

b. The Purity of God’s being a perfectly righteous spirit

Habakkuk 1: 13 – “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” “Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours one more righteous than he?”

Job 25: 5 – “If even the moon does not shine and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?”

Matthew Henry says: “He shows how dark and defective even the heavenly bodies are in the sight of God, and in comparison with him, and thence infers how little, and mean, and worthless, man is. 1. The lights of heaven, though beauteous creatures, are before God as clods of earth (Job_25:5): Behold even to the moon, walking in brightness, and the stars, those glorious lamps of heaven, which the heathen were so charmed with the lustre of that they worshipped them - yet, in God’s sight, in comparison with him, they shine not, they are not pure; they have no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth, as a candle, though it burn, yet does not shine when it is set in the clear light of the sun. The glory of God, shining in his providences, eclipses the glory of the brightest creatures, Isa_24:23. The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Sion. The heavenly bodies are often clouded; we plainly see spots in the moon, and, with the help of glasses, may sometimes discern spots upon the sun too: but God sees spots in them that we do not see. How durst Job then so

confidently appeal to God, who would discover that amiss in him which he was not aware of in himself? 2. The children of men, though noble creatures, are before God but as worms of the earth (Job_25:6): How much less does man shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness that is a worm, and the son of man, whoever he be, that is a worm! - a vermin (so some), not only mean and despicable, but noxious and detestable; a mite (so others), the smallest animal, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but through a magnifying glass. Such a thing is man. (1.) So mean, and little, and inconsiderable, in comparison with God and with the holy angels: so worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastening to corruption. What little reason has man to be proud, and what great reason to be humble! (2.) So weak and impotent, and so easily crushed, and therefore a very unequal match for Almighty God. Shall man be such a fool as to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces more easily than we can a worm? (3.) So sordid and filthy. Man is not pure for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us therefore wonder at God's condescension in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself, especially at the condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself so far as to say, I am a worm, and no man." Psa_22:6.