

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”, Message # 61 – “Eternal Generation of the Son”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall, on January 3rd, 2021.

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)

Micah 5: 2 – “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose going forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

This is speaking in prophetic language of the Incarnation of Christ; His birth taking place at Bethlehem in a stable. Out of these humble beginnings, Christ through His perfect life and earthly ministry of fulfilling the law, He would come forth to be Ruler in Israel. But His goings forth as God the Son began in eternity past from everlasting in the Eternal Generation of the Son.

Francis Turretin says – “But in order that the truth of this eternal generation may be built up better, something must be premised concerning its nature.” “Not that it can be conceied or explained by us.” “For here the voice is silent, the mind fails; not only mine but even that of angels, as St. Ambrose says. Gregory Nazianzus puts a stop to our curiosity when he wishes it to be revered in silence: “The begetting of God is to be honored by silence; the great thing is for you to learn He was begotten.” Vol. 1, P. 292, Institutes of Elenctic Theology

He further says: “Whatever may be the analogy between natural and human generations, and the supernatural and divine, still the latter is not to be measured by the former or to be tried by them because they greatly differ (whether we consider the principle, the mode or the end.)” “For in physical generation the principle is not only active, but also passive and material; but in the divine it is only active.” “In the former, a communication is made not of the whole essence, but only of a part which falls and is alienated from the begetter.” “In the latter the same numerical essence is communicated without division and alienation.” “In the one, the produced is not only distinct but also separate from the begetter because the begetter generates out of himself terminatively.” “In the other, the begetter generates in Himself and not out of Himself. Thus the begotten Son (although distinct) still is never divided from Him.” “He is not only of a like (homoiousios), but also of the same essence (homoousios).” P. 293

A. In being Begotten of the Father, the Son was brought forth within the Godhead as the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity, in eternity past.

Psalm 2: 7, 8 – “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, today, I have begotten You.” “Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.”

We can see in verse 7, that the Son is declaring the decree of the Father; that is, in the everlasting and eternal decree which took place in the council of redemption in eternity past, before the world was ever created, the Father declared the Son to be His Son whom He brought forth within Himself to accomplish His purpose in regard to the salvation of His elect people among all nations, and in all generations of time. He would ask in eternity and it would be answered there in eternity as well; that this would most certainly come to pass as the Eternal Son took to Himself human flesh and nature; fulfilled God’s holy law, and offered Himself a sacrifice for our sins, and then was raised from the dead, fulfilling this decree, so that this Psalm 2, verses 7 and 8 are quoted by the apostle Paul in Acts chapter 13, verse 33 – “God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus.” “As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’”

B. In the sense of Christ’s resurrection as a Man, He was proved to be both the only-begotten of the Father, and the first-begotten (firstborn) from the dead (among men).

Colossians 1: 15-18 – “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or power.” “All things were created through Him and for Him.” “And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

So we have seen the declaring of the decree, in eternity past, when the Son was brought forth from the Father, and that He was appointed from eternity past to be the firstborn over all creation. Not that He the Divine Son was created, but rather that all things were created by Him and He was before all things, and in Him all things consist. That is, that He is God the Son, the only-begotten of the Father. But now we also see here that the Son was distinguished by His being given a Mediatorial Kingdom over which He would be head, and one over which He would rule over by the Father’s appointment. In that kingdom, and over all things, Christ would have the preeminence.

Luke 22: 29 – “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me.” The Son was brought forth in eternity past just for the purpose of fulfilling the eternal purpose of the Father to have a people for His own possession.

C. The Time of the Son’s Being Begotten of the Father was the “Day” of Eternity Past.

Petrus Van Mastricht in the 2nd Volume of his Works, P. 539 says – “Following the Father in the Divine Economy is the Son.” “For just as the Father, because He subsists from Himself, is the 1st Person, so also the Son, because He subsists from the Father and has His Essence communicated to Him from the Father, is the 2nd.” “Accordingly, just as we have contemplated the Father, so now we will also contemplate the Son.” “He relates His Personal

description and economic office from the economic covenant in the words from Psalm 2: 7 and 8.

“The economic covenant between Himself and the Father is stated by the Son: “I will tell the decree.”

(By economy, Van Mastricht means – The Designated Stipulations in what would be done by the Father and what would be done by the Son in relation to the covenant of Redemption between them.)

“His eternal generation, as the foundation of His Sonship: “Today I have begotten you.”

“The time of the Begetting, as it were – called “Today”. “It can be taken in a twofold manner: (1) properly, concerning eternal generation, “Today I have begotten you”, where “today” is an adverb of present time denoting the continued existence of the generation without succession, but “I have begotten” is a verb of past time denoting perfection and consummation.” “Generation is also referred to “today” insofar as eternity coexists present with all types of time. (Psalm 90: 4, 2nd Peter 3: 8)”

Proverbs 8: 22-26 – “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.” “I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there ever was an earth.” “When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water.” “Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust of the world.”

This is the eternal generation of the Son.

Proverbs 8: 27-31 – “When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men.”

Francis Turretin says again – “This generation was made without time (achronos); not in time but from eternity.” “Therefore not priority of posteriority of duration can be observed here, although there may be priority of order according to which the Son is from the Father, although not after the Father.” “(2) Without place (achoristos) because the Father did not beget out of Himself, but in the same essence.” “Hence the Word (Logos) is said to have been with God, and the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father.” (3) Without any passion (apathos) or change, either in the Father or in the son, since that He begat denotes no imperfection, but is rather the reception of all perfection.” “Although therefore, with respect to the Father generation may well be called active, still it cannot well be called passive with respect to the Son because otherwise the Son could be said to be in the power of the begetter.” Nor is there a difficulty in His being said to be begotten for this, which is spoke after the manner of men (anthropopathos), must be understood worthily of God (theoprepos) by removing all imperfection.”