

Of the Distinct Personality, and Deity of the Father.

by John Gill

The sermon emphasizes the distinct personality and deity of the Father, highlighting his individuality, personal actions, and divine perfections.

Scripture: Matthew 4:10, Matthew 11:27, John 4:23, John 5:26, John 6:44, Romans 15:6, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 2:1, Hebrews 1:3, 1 Peter 1:2

Topics: "The Trinity", "The Deity of the Father"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the distinct personality and deity of the Father, arguing that the Father is an individual divine person, distinguishable from the Son and the Holy Spirit. He supports this by referencing scriptural definitions of personhood, the Father's unique actions such as creation and providence, and His divine attributes that affirm His deity. Gill highlights that the Father is the source of life, knowledge, and power, and is the ultimate object of worship, thus establishing His role within the Trinity. The sermon underscores the importance of recognizing the Father's distinct personality while maintaining the equality of the Godhead.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 29

OF THE DISTINCT PERSONALITY,
AND DEITY OF THE FATHER.

Though what has been already observed, clearly shows there is a distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and wherein that distinction lies; yet other things may be added, which will serve to illustrate and confirm it; and which will be produced, not as making it, but as making it more clearly to appear. A person is by some^[1] defined, "An individual that subsists, is living, intelligent, is not sustained by another, nor is a part of another;" and which is true of each of the three Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.

I shall begin with the personality of the Father; the word "Person" is expressly used of him in Hebrews 1:3 where Christ his Son, by whom he made the worlds, is called, "the express image of his person": the word

upostasiv, here used, is translated "substance" in Hebrews 11:1 and some would have it so rendered here; and some of the Latin writers did use the word "substantia, substance": but then they understood it, and made use of it, just in the same sense as we do the word person; but finding it to be an ambiguous word, and that it tended to lead men to imagine there were three distinct divine Beings, they left it off, and chose the word person, as less exceptionable; the Greek writers, and some even before the council of Nice, took the word here used, in the same sense as we do, for "subsistence", or person[2]; and so it is here rendered by many learned men, as Valla, Vatablus, Erasmus, Calvin, Beza, Piscator, Paneus, and others; in which translation we may safely acquiesce.

The definition of a person agrees with the Father of Christ, as before observed. The Father of Christ is an individual, and so distinguishable from the divine nature he is possessed of, in common with the Son and Spirit; he subsists of himself, he does not owe his being to another, nor is he upheld in it by another; nor is he possessed only of a part, but of the whole Deity; he is the living Father, has life in himself, and not from another, (John 5:26, 6:57) and is intelligent, knows himself, his Son and Spirit, and all things (Matthew 11:27).

The personality of the Father may be concluded from those personal actions which are ascribed to him; for besides begetting the Son, which is what distinguishes him from the other two persons, there are other acts which illustrate and confirm the distinction made, though they do not make it; as, 1. The creation of all things is ascribed to him; he is said, as the Father of Christ, to make the worlds by him his Son, and to create all things by him; not as an instrument, but as a co-efficient cause (Heb. 1:2; Eph. 3:9). 2.

The works of providence, as upholding and sustaining all creatures in their being, supplying them with all things necessary, governing the world, ordering and disposing of all persons and things in it, are attributed to him, in distinction from his Son, though in conjunction with him, "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). 3. The mission of his Son into the world to be the Saviour of men, shows his distinct personality from him, which is often said of him; now he that sends, and he that is sent, cannot be the same person, but must be distinct; indeed the Spirit of God is said also to send Christ, as well as the Father, (Isa. 48:16) but then, though the Son is sent by both, and the Spirit is sent both by the Father and the Son, yet the Father is never said to be sent by either; he is always the sender, and never the sent. 4.

The several distinct acts of grace towards the elect in Christ, will serve to evince the distinct personality of the Father. Men are said to be elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, (1 Peter 1:2) and are said to be chosen by him in Christ unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and therefore must be distinct from Christ, in whom, and to whose salvation they are chosen; and from the Spirit, through whose sanctification they are chosen to the obtaining of the glory of Christ, (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14) planning the scheme of man's salvation by Christ; reconciling, or forming the scheme of reconciliation in Christ; consulting in the council of peace with him about it, are personal acts, and distinguish him from Christ; making a covenant with his Son on account of elect men, putting their persons into his hands, blessing them with all spiritual blessings in him, and giving grace to them in him before the world was; as they are personal acts, so they show him to be distinct from his Son, with whom he covenanted, and whom he entrusted with the said persons and things: his drawing them by the powerful influences of his grace in time, to come to Christ and believe in him, (John 6:44) promising and giving the Spirit as a convincer, comforter, enlightener, and strengthener, with many other things, serve to illustrate and confirm his distinct personality.

Now we call the Father the first person, not that he is so in order of time or causality, and as if he was "fons Deitatis", the fountain of Deity, as some good men have wrongly called him; for rather the Deity is the fountain of the divine persons, from whence they arise together, and in which they subsist, and in which they have no superiority and preeminence of one another; but as it is necessary to speak of them in some order, it seems most proper to place the Father first, whence we call him the first person, and then the Son, and then the Spirit; in which order they are usually put in scripture; though to show there is a perfect equality between them, this order is sometimes inverted.

That the Father of Christ, as he is a person, so a divine person, will not be doubted; nor is his Deity called in question; and yet it may be proper to say something of it, and establish it; which may be done, not only by observing that he is expressly and distinctly called God, (Rom. 15:6; Gal. 1:1; Phil. 2:11) but this may be proved, 1. From his divine perfections: God necessarily exists, owes his being to no other, subsists of himself, and is independent of any; such is the Father of Christ, he "has life in himself" and of himself, and does not derive it from another (John 5:26).

God is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning and end; so is the Father of Christ, he is he "which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev. 1:4). God is immense and omnipresent, cannot be circumscribed by space, he fills heaven and earth, and is contained in neither; such is the Father of Christ, of whom he often speaks as in heaven, and yet with him on earth, and with all his people, at all times, and in all ages (John 14:23, 16:32). God is omniscient, knows all persons and things; and so does the Father of Christ, he knows the Son in such sense as no other does, and knows that which neither the angels nor the Son, as man, know, even the day and hour of judgment, (Matthew 11:27; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7; 2 Cor. 11:31).

God is omnipotent, he can do all things; and so can the Father of Christ, "Abba, Father", says Christ, "all things are possible unto thee" (Mark 14:36; Matthew 19:26; John 10:29). Once more, God is immutable, not subject to any change and variation; God, the Father of Christ, is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, (James 1:17) he is unchangeable in his purposes and promises made in Christ, and in his love which is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

In short, there is no perfection in Deity but what God, the Father of Christ, is possessed of. 2. His Deity will appear from the works which are ascribed to him, and which none but God could do; such as making the heaven, the earth and sea, and all that in them are; and who as the maker of them is addressed by the apostle, (Acts 4:24-27) and hence by Christ called Father, Lord of heaven and earth, (Matthew 11:25) and the works of providence, before observed, are ascribed to him, as supporting the world by his power, governing it by his wisdom, and supplying it by his goodness, which none but God could do: (see Matthew 6:26, 32) And his mighty acts of grace in quickening sinners dead in sins, in doing which the same power is put forth as in raising Christ from the dead, (Eph. 2:1, 1:19) and in forgiving the sins of men, which none but God can do, (Mark 2:7) and for which Christ prayed to his Father on the behalf of his enemies, (Luke 23:34) to which may be added the resurrection of the dead, which is purely a divine work, and requires almighty power.

The resurrection of Christ is most frequently ascribed to him, and he will raise the dead at the last day (1 Cor. 6:14). From these and from many other divine works, may the Deity of the Father be concluded, as well as, 3. From the worship due to him, and given to him. None but God is and ought to be the object of religious worship and adoration; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve", (Matthew 4:10) now true worshippers of God "worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father

seeketh such to worship him", (John 4:23) and the Father of Christ is frequently represented as the object of faith, hope, and love; to whom prayer is to be made, and to whom prayer was made both by Christ and his apostles; how often are grace and peace wished for from him in the several epistles? and he stands first in the form of baptism, which is a solemn act of divine and religious worship. ENDNOTES:

[1] Vid. Wendelin. Christ. Theolog. I. 1. c. 2. p. 93, 94.

[2] See my Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 93.

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