

The Principle of the Assignment of Divine Honour Unto the Person of Christ

by John Owen

The sermon emphasizes the foundational role of faith in Christ for divine honour and salvation throughout biblical history.

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, John 1:12, John 3:36, John 14:1, Romans 10:14, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:18, Hebrews 11:6, 1 Peter 1:21, Revelation 13:8

Topics: "Faith in Christ", "Divine Honor"

Description

John Owen emphasizes that the assignation of divine honor to Christ is fundamentally rooted in faith in Him, which has been the cornerstone of true religion since the fall of man. He argues against the notion that faith in Christ was not necessary for worship and salvation, asserting that the first promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15 establishes Christ as the sole means of deliverance from sin. Owen highlights that all Old Testament sacrifices were types pointing to Christ's ultimate sacrifice, reinforcing the necessity of faith in Him for justification and salvation. He concludes that true faith in Christ encompasses both belief in His person and trust in His mediatorial work, which is essential for spiritual life and divine worship.

Transcript

The principle and spring of this assignation of divine honour unto Christ, in both the branches of it, is faith in him. And this hath been the foundation of all acceptable religion in the world since the entrance of sin. There are some who deny that faith in Christ was required from the beginning, or was necessary unto the worship of God, or the justification and salvation of them that did obey him. For, whereas it must be granted that "without faith it is impossible to please God," which the apostle proves by instances from the foundation of the world, Heb. xi. -- they suppose it is faith in God under the general notion of it, without any respect unto Christ, that is intended. It is not my design to contend with any, nor expressly to confute such ungrateful opinions -- such pernicious errors. Such this is, which -- being pursued in its proper tendency -- strikes at the very foundation of Christian religion; for it at once deprives us of all contribution of light and truth from the Old Testament. Somewhat I have spoken before of the faith of the saints of old concerning him. I shall now, therefore, only confirm the truth, by some principles which are fundamental in the faith of the Gospel.

1. The first promise, Gen. iii. 15 -- truly called

was revealed, proposed, and given, as containing and expressing the only means of delivery from that apostasy from God, with all the effects of it, under which our first parents and all their posterity were cast by sin. The destruction of Satan and his work in his introduction of the state of sin, by a Saviour and Deliverer, was prepared and provided for in it. This is the very foundation of the faith of the church; and if it be denied, nothing of the economy or dispensation of God towards it from the beginning can be understood. The whole doctrine and story of the Old Testament must be rejected as useless, and no foundation be left in the truth of God for the introduction of the New.

2. It was the person of Christ, his incarnation and mediation, that were promised under the name of the "seed of the woman," and the work he should do in breaking the head of the serpent, with the way whereby he should do it in suffering, by his power. The accomplishment hereof was in God's sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the fulness of time, made under the law, or by his manifestation in the flesh, to destroy the works of the devil. So is ¹²¹this promise interpreted, Gal. iii. 13; iv. 4; Heb. ii. 14-16; 1 John iii. 8. This cannot be denied but upon one of these two grounds:--

(1.) That nothing is intended in that divine revelation but only a natural enmity that is between mankind and serpents. But this is so foolish an imagination, that the Jews themselves, who constantly refer this place to the Messiah, are not guilty of. All the whole truth concerning God's displeasure on the sin of our first parents, with what concerneth the nature and consequence of that sin, is everted hereby. And whereas the foundation of all God's future dealing with them and their posterity is plainly expressed herein, it is turned into that which is ludicrous, and of very little concernment in human life. For such is the enmity between mankind and serpents -- which not one in a million knows any thing of or is troubled with. This is but to lay the axe of atheism unto all religion built on divine revelation. Besides, on this supposition, there is in the words not the least intimation of any relief that God tendered unto our parents for their delivery from the state and condition whereinto they had cast themselves by their sin and apostasy. Wherefore they must be esteemed to be left absolutely under the curse, as the angels were that fell -- which is to root all religion out of the world. For amongst them who are absolutely under the curse, without any remedy, there can be no more than is in hell. Or --

(2.) It must be, because some other way of deliverance and salvation, and not that by Christ, is here proposed and promised. But, whereas they were to be wrought by the "seed of the woman" -- if this were not that Christ in whom we do believe, there was another promised, and he is to be rejected. And this is fairly at once to blot out the whole Scripture as a fable; for there is not a line of doctrinal truth in it but what depends on the tradition of Christ from this first promise.

3. This promise was confirmed, and the way of the deliverance of the church by virtue of it declared, in the institution of expiatory sacrifices. God in them and by them declared from the beginning, that "without shedding of blood there was no remission;" that atonement for sin was to be made by substitution and satisfaction. With respect unto them, the Lord Christ was called "The Lamb of God," even as he took away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of himself, John i. 29. For we "were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 19. Wherein the Holy Spirit refers unto the institution and nature of sacrifices from the beginning. And he is thence represented in heaven as a "Lamb that had been slain," Rev. v. 6 -- the glory of heaven arising from the fruits and effects of his sacrifice. And ¹²²because of the representation thereof in all the former sacrifices, is he said to be a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. xiii. 8. And it is strange to me that any who deny not the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, should doubt whether the original of these sacrifices were of divine institution or the invention of men. And it is so, amongst others, for the reasons ensuing:--

(1.) On the supposition that they were of men's finding out and voluntary observation, without any previous divine revelation, it must be granted that the foundation of all acceptable religion in the world was laid in, and resolved into, the wisdom and wills of men, and not into the wisdom, authority, and will of God. For that the great solemnity of religion, which was as the centre and testimony of all its other duties, did consist in these sacrifices even before the giving of the law, will not be denied. And in the giving of the law, God did not, on this supposition, confirm and establish his own institutions with additions unto them of the same kind, but set his seal and approbation unto the inventions of men. But this is contrary unto natural light, and the whole current of Scripture revelations.

(2.) All expiatory sacrifices were, from the beginning, types and representations of the sacrifice of Christ; whereon all their use, efficacy, and benefit among men -- all their acceptance with God -- did depend. Remove this consideration from them, and they were as irrational a service, as unbecoming the divine nature, as any thing that reasonable creatures could fix upon. They are to this day as reasonable a service as ever they were, but that only their respect unto the sacrifice of Christ is taken from them. And what person of any ordinary understanding could now suppose them a meet service whereby to glorify the divine nature? Besides, all expiatory sacrifices were of the same nature, and of the same use, both before and after the giving of the law. But that all those afterwards were typical of the sacrifice of Christ, the apostle demonstrates at large in his Epistle unto the Hebrews. The inquiry, therefore, is, whether this blessed prefiguration of the Lord Christ and his sacrifice, as he was the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, was an effect of the wisdom, goodness, and will of God, or of the wills and inventions of men. And let it be considered, also, that these men, who are supposed to be the authors of this wonderful representation of the Lord Christ and his sacrifice, did indeed know little of them -- or, as the assertors of this opinion imagine, nothing at all. To suppose that those who knew no more of Christ than they could learn from the first promise -- which, as some think, was nothing at all -- should of their own heads find out and appoint this divine service, which consisted only in the prefiguration of him and his sacrifice; and that God should not only approve of it, but allow it as the principal means for the establishment and exercise of the faith of all believers for four thousand years; is to indulge unto thoughts deviating from all rules of sobriety. He that sees not a divine wisdom in this institution, hath scarce seriously exercised his thoughts about it. But I have elsewhere considered the causes and original of these sacrifices, and shall not therefore farther insist upon them.

4. Our first parents and all their holy posterity did believe this promise, or did embrace it as the only way and means of their deliverance from the curse and state of sin; and were thereon justified before God. I confess we have not infallible assurance of any who did so in particular, but those who are mentioned by name in Scripture, as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and some others; but to question it concerning others also, as of our first parents themselves, is foolish and impious. This is done by the Socinians to promote another design, namely, that none were justified before God on the belief of the first promise, but on their walking according to the light of nature, and their obedience unto some especial revelations about temporal things -- the vanity whereof hath been before discovered. Wherefore, our first parents and their posterity did so believe the first promise, or they must be supposed either to have been kept under the curse, or else to have had, and to make use of, some other way of deliverance from it. To imagine the first is impious -- for the apostle affirms that they had this testimony, that they pleased God, Heb. xi. 5; which under the curse none can do -- for that is God's displeasure. And in the same place he confirms their faith, and justification thereon, with a "cloud of witnesses," chap. xii. 1. To affirm the latter is groundless; and it includes a supposal of the relinquishment of the wisdom, grace, and authority of God in that divine revelation, for men to betake themselves to none knows what. For that there was in this promise the way expressed

which God in his wisdom and grace had provided for their deliverance, we have proved before. To forsake this way, and to betake themselves unto any other, whereof he had made no mention or revelation unto them, was to reject his authority and grace.

As for those who are otherwise minded, it is incumbent on them directly to prove these three things:--

(1.) That there is another way -- that there are other means for the justification and salvation of sinners -- than that revealed, declared, and proposed in that first promise. And when this is done, they must show to what end -- on that supposition -- the promise itself was given, seeing the end of it is evacuated.

(2.) That upon a supposition that God had revealed in the promise the way and means of our deliverance from the curses and state of sin, it was lawful unto men to forsake it, and to betake themselves ¹²⁴unto another way, without any supernatural revelation for their guidance. For if it was not, their relinquishment of the promise was no less apostasy from God in the revelation of himself in a way of grace, than the first sin was as to the revelation of himself in the works of nature: only, the one revelation was by inbred principles, the other by external declaration; nor could it otherwise be. Or, --

(3.) That there was some other way of the participation of the benefit of this promise, besides faith in it, or in him who was promised therein; seeing the apostle hath declared that no promise will profit them by whom it is not mixed with faith, Heb. iv. 2. Unless these things are plainly proved -- which they will never be -- whatever men declaim about universal objective grace in the documents of nature, it is but a vain imagination.

5. The declaration of this promise, before the giving of the law, with the nature and ends of it, as also the use of sacrifices, whereby it was confirmed, was committed unto the ordinary ministry of our first parents and their godly posterity, and the extraordinary ministry of the prophets which God raised up among them. For God spake of our redemption by Christ by the mouth of his holy prophets from the beginning of the world, Luke i. 70. No greater duty could be incumbent on them, by the light of nature and the express revelation of the will of God, than that they should, in their several capacities, communicate the knowledge of this promise unto all in whom they were concerned. To suppose that our first parents, who received this promise, and those unto whom they first declared it, looking on it as the only foundation of their acceptance with God and deliverance from the curse, were negligent in the declaration and preaching of it, is to render them brutish, and guilty of a second apostasy from God. And unto this principle -- which is founded in the light of nature -- there is countenance given by revelation also. For Enoch did prophesy of the things which were to accompany the accomplishment of this promise, Jude 14; and Noah was a preacher of the righteousness to be brought in by it, 2 Peter ii. 5 -- as he was an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, in himself, Heb. xi. 7.

6. All the promises that God gave afterwards unto the church under the Old Testament, before and after giving the law -- all the covenants that he entered into with particular persons, or the whole congregation of believers -- were all of them declarations and confirmations of the first promise, or the way of salvation by the mediation of his Son, becoming the seed of the woman, to break the head of the serpent, and to work out the deliverance of mankind. As most of these promises were expressly concerning him, so all of them in the counsel of God were confirmed in him, 2 Cor. i. 20. And as there are depths in the Scripture of the Old Testament concerning ¹²⁵him which we cannot fathom, and things innumerable spoken of him or in his person which we conceive not, so the principal design of the whole is the declaration of him and his grace. And it is unprofitable unto them who are otherwise minded. Sundry promises concerning temporal

things were, on various occasions, superadded unto this great spiritual promise of life and grace. And the enemies of the person and mediation of Christ do contend that men are justified by their faith and obedience with respect unto those particular revelations, which were only concerning temporal things. But to suppose that all those revelations and promises were not built upon and resolved into, did not include in them, the grace and mercy of this first promise -- is to make them curses instead of blessings, and deprivations of that grace which was infinitely better than what, on this supposition, was contained in them. The truth is, they were all additions unto it, and confirmations of it; nor had any thing of spiritual good in them, but upon a supposition of it. In some of them there was an ampliation of grace in the more full declaration of the nature of this promise, as well as an application unto their persons unto whom they were made. Such was the promise made unto Abraham, which had a direct respect unto Christ, as the apostle proveth, Gal. iii. and iv.

7. Those who voluntarily, through the contempt of God and divine grace, fell off from the knowledge and faith of this promise, whether at once and by choice, or gradually through the love of sin, were in no better condition than those have been, or would be, who have so fallen off or should so apostatize from Christian religion after its revelation and profession. And although this proved, in process of time, both before and after the flood, to be the condition of the generality of mankind, yet is it in vain to seek after the means of salvation among them who had voluntarily rejected the only way which God had revealed and provided for that end. God thereon "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," Acts xiv. 16 -- "winking at the times of their ignorance" -- not calling them to repentance, chap. xvii. 30; yea, he "gave them up unto their own hearts lust, and they walked in their own counsels," Ps. lxxxix. 12. And nothing can be more derogatory unto the wisdom and holiness of God, than to imagine that he would grant other ways of salvation unto them who had rejected that only one which he had provided; which was by faith in Christ, as revealed in that first promise.

8. From these considerations, which are all of them unquestionable principles of truth, two things are evident.

(1.) That there was no way of the justification and salvation of sinners revealed and proposed from the foundation of the world, but only by Jesus Christ, as declared in the first promise.

126(2.) That there was no way for the participation of the benefits of that promise, or of his work of mediation, but by faith in him as so promised. There was, therefore, faith in him required from the foundation of the world; that is, from the entrance of sin. And how this faith respected his person hath been before declared. Now, faith in him as promised for the works and ends of his mediation, and faith in him as actually exhibited and as having accomplished his work, are essentially the same, and differ only with respect unto the economy of times, which God disposed at his pleasure. Hence the efficacy of his mediation was the same unto them who then so believed, as it is now unto us after his actual exhibition in the flesh.

But yet it is acknowledged, that -- as unto the clearness and fulness of the revelation of the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in him -- as unto the constitution of his person in his incarnation, and therein the determination of the individual person promised from the beginning, through the actual accomplishment of the work which he was promised for -- faith in him, as the foundation of that divine honour which it is our duty to give unto him, is far more evidently and manifestly revealed and required in the Gospel, or under the New Testament, than it was under the Old. See Eph. iii. 8-11. The respect of faith now unto Christ is that which renders it truly evangelical. To believe in him, to believe on his name, is that signal especial

duty which is now required of us.

Wherefore the ground of the actual assignation of divine honour unto the person of Christ, in both branches of it, adoration and invocation, is faith in him. So he said unto the blind man whose eyes he opened, "Believest thou on the Son of God?" John ix. 35. And he said, "Lord, I believe; and he worshipped him," verse 38. All divine worship or adoration is a consequent effect and fruit of faith. So also is invocation; for "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14. Him in whom we believe, we ought to adore and invoke. For these are the principal ways whereby divine faith doth act itself. And so to adore or invoke any in whom we ought not to believe, is idolatry.

This faith, therefore, on the person of Christ is our duty; yea, such a duty it is, as that our eternal condition doth more peculiarly depend on the performance or nonperformance of it than on any other duty whatever. For constantly under those terms is it prescribed unto us. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. Wherefore the nature and exercise of this faith must be inquired into.

There is a faith which is exercised towards those by whom the mind and will of God is revealed. So it is said of the Israelites, "They believed the Lord and Moses," Exod. xiv. 31; that is, that he was sent of God, was no deceiver -- that it was the word and will of God which he revealed unto them. So 2 Chron. xx. 20, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." It was not the persons of the prophets, but their message, that was the object of the faith required. It was to believe what they said, as from God -- not to believe in them as if they were God. So it is explained by the apostle, Acts xxvi. 27, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." He believed that they were sent of God, and that the word they spake was from him; otherwise there was no believing of them who were dead so many ages before.

And this is all the faith in Christ himself which some will allow. To believe in Christ, they say, is only to believe the doctrine of the Gospel revealed by him. Hence they deny that any could believe in him before his coming into the world, and the declaration of the mind of God in the Gospel made by him. An assent unto the truth of the Gospel, as revealed by Christ, is with them the whole of that faith in Christ Jesus which is required of us.

Of all that poison which at this day is diffused in the minds of men, corrupting them from the mystery of the Gospel, there is no part that is more pernicious than this one perverse imagination, that to believe in Christ is nothing at all but to believe the doctrine of the Gospel; which yet, we grant, is included therein. For as it allows the consideration of no office in him but that of a prophet, and that not as vested and exercised in his divine person, so it utterly overthrows the whole foundation of the relation of the church unto him, and salvation by him.

That which suits my present design, is to evince that it is the person of Christ which is the first and principal object of that faith wherewith we are required to believe in him; and that so to do, is not only to assent unto the truth of the doctrine revealed by him, but also to place our trust and confidence in him for mercy, relief, and protection -- for righteousness, life, and salvation -- for a blessed resurrection and eternal reward. This I shall first manifest from some few of those multiplied testimonies wherein this truth is declared, and whereby it is confirmed as also with some arguments taken from them; and then proceed to declare the ground, nature, and exercise of this faith itself.

As unto the testimonies confirming this truth, it must be observed of them all in general, that wherever faith is required towards our Lord Jesus Christ, it is still called believing "in him," or "on his name," according as faith in God absolutely is every where expressed. 128If no more be intended but only the belief of the doctrine revealed by him, then whose doctrine soever we are obliged to believe, we may be rightly said to believe in them, or to believe on their name. For instance, we are obliged to believe the doctrine of Paul the apostle, the revelations made by him, and that on the hazard of our eternal welfare by the unbelieving of them; yet that we should be said to believe in Paul, is that which he did utterly detest, 1 Cor. i. 13, 15.

For the places themselves the reader may consult, among others John i. 12; iii. 16, 18, 36; vi. 29, 35, 41; vii. 38, 39; Acts xiv. 23; xvi. 31; xix. 4; xxiv. 24; xxvi. 18; Rom. iii. 26; ix. 33; x. 11; 1 Peter ii. 6; 1 John v. 10, 13. There is not one of these but sufficiently confirms the truth. Some few others not named may be briefly insisted on.

John xiv. 1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." The distinction made between God and him limits the name of God unto the person of the Father. Faith is required in them both, and that distinctly: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And it is the same faith, of the same kind, to be exercised in the same way and manner, that is required; as is plain in the words. They will not admit of a double faith, of one faith in God, and of another in Christ, or of a distinct way of their exercise.

Wherefore, as faith divine is fixed on, and terminated in, the person of the Father; so is it likewise distinctly in and on the person of the Son: and it was to evidence his divine nature unto them -- which is the ground and reason of their faith -- that he gave his command unto his disciples. This he farther testifies, verses 9-11. And as unto the exercise of this faith, it respected the relief of their souls, under troubles, fears, and disconsolations: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." To believe in him unto the relief of our souls against troubles, is not to assent merely unto the doctrine of the Gospel, but also to place our trust and confidence in him, for such supplies of grace, for such an exercise of the acts of divine power, as whereby we may be supported and delivered. And we have herein the whole of what we plead. Divine faith acted distinctly in, and terminated on, the person of Christ -- and that with respect unto supplies of grace and mercy from him in a way of divine power.

So he speaks unto Martha, John xi. 25-27, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" Whereunto she answers "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God." His person was the object of her faith; and her belief in him comprised a trust for all spiritual and eternal mercies.

129I shall add one more, wherein not only the thing itself, but the especial ground and reason of it, is declared, Gal. ii. 20 -- "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." That faith he asserts which is the cause of our spiritual life -- that life unto God which we lead in the flesh, or whilst we are in the body, not yet admitted unto sight and enjoyment. Of this faith the Son of God is both the author and the object; the latter whereof is here principally intended. And this is evident from the reason and motive of it, which are expressed. This faith I live by, am in the continual exercise of, because he "loved me, and gave himself for me." For this is that which doth powerfully influence our hearts to fix our faith in him and on him. And that person who so loved us is the same in whom we do believe. If his person was the seat of his own love, it is the object of our faith And this faith is not only our duty, but our life. He that hath it not, is dead in the sight of God.

But I hope it is not yet necessary to multiply testimonies to prove it our duty to believe in Jesus Christ -- that is, to believe in the person of the Son of God, for other faith in Christ there is none; yet I shall add one or two considerations in the confirmation of it.

1st, There is no more necessary hereunto -- namely, to prove the person of Christ the Son of God to be the proper and distinct object of faith divine -- than what we have already demonstrated concerning the solemn invocation of him. For, saith the apostle, "How they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14. It holds on either side. We cannot, we ought not, to call on him in whom we do not, we ought not to believe. And in whom we do believe, on him we ought to call. Wherefore, if it be our duty to call on the name of Christ, it is our duty to believe in the person of Christ. And if to believe in Christ be no more but to believe the doctrine of the Gospel which he hath revealed, then every one whose doctrine we are obliged to believe, on them we ought to call also. And on this ground, we may call on the names of the prophets and apostles, as well as on the name of Jesus Christ, and be saved thereby. But whereas invocation or prayer proceedeth from faith, and that prayer is for mercy, grace, life, and eternal salvation; faith must be fixed on the person so called on, as able to give them all unto us, or that prayer is in vain.

2dly, Again, that we are baptized into the name of Jesus Christ, and that distinctly with the Father, is a sufficient evidence of the necessity of faith in his person; for we are therein given up unto universal spiritual subjection of soul unto him, and dependence on him. Not to believe in him, on his name -- that is, his person -- when we are so given up unto him, or baptized into him, is virtually to renounce him. But to put a present close unto this contest: Faith in Christ is that grace whereby the church is united unto him -- incorporated into one mystical body with him. It is thereby that he dwells in them, and they in him. By this alone are all supplies of grace derived from him unto the whole body. Deny his person to be the proper and immediate object of this faith, and all these things are utterly overthrown -- that is, the whole spiritual life and eternal salvation of the church.

This faith in the person of Christ, which is the foundation of all that divine honour in sacred adoration and invocation which is assigned unto him, may be considered two ways. First, as it respects his person absolutely; Secondly, As he is considered in the discharge of the office of mediation.

First, In the first sense, faith is placed absolutely and ultimately on the person of Christ, even as on the person of the Father. He counts it no robbery herein to be equal with the Father. And the reason hereof is, because the divine nature itself is the proper and immediate object of this faith, and all the acts of it. This being one and the same in the person of the Father and of the Son, as also of the Holy Spirit, two things do follow thereon. 1. That each person is equally the object of our faith, because equally participant of that nature which is the formal reason and object of it. 2. It follows also, that in acting faith on, and ascribing therewithal divine honour unto, any one person, the others are not excluded; yea, they are included therein. For by reason of the mutual inbeing of the Divine persons in the unity of the same nature, the object of all spiritual worship is undivided. Hence are those expressions of the Scriptures, "He that hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father; he that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father, for he and the Father are one."

And to clear our present design, three things may be observed from hence; namely, that the divine nature, with all its essential properties, is the formal reason and only ground of divine faith. As--

1st, That the Lord Christ is not the absolute and ultimate object of our faith, any otherwise but under this consideration, of his being partaker of the nature of God -- of his being in the form of God, and equal unto

him. Without this, to place our faith in him would be robbery and sacrilege; as is all the pretended faith of them who believe not his divine person.

2dly, There is no derogation from the honour and glory of the Father -- not the least diversion of any one signal act of duty from him, nor from the Holy Spirit -- by the especial acting of faith on the person of Christ; for all divine honour is given solely unto the 131divine nature: and this being absolutely the same in each person, in the honouring of one, they are all equally honoured. He that honoureth the Son, he therein honoureth the Father also.

3dly, Hence it appears what is that especial acting of faith on the person of Christ which we intend, and which in the Scripture is given in charge unto us, as indispensably necessary unto our salvation. And there are three things to be considered in it.

(1st.) That his divine nature is the proper formal object of this faith, on the consideration whereof alone it is fixed on him. If you ask a reason why I believe on the Son of God -- if you intend what cause I have for it, what motives unto it -- I shall answer, It is because of what he hath done for me, whereof afterwards. So doth the apostle, Gal. ii. 20. But if you intend, what is the formal reason, ground, and warranty whereon I thus believe in him, or place my trust and confidence in him, I say it is only this, that he is "over all, God blessed for ever;" and were he not so, I could not believe in him. For to believe in any, is to expect from him that to be done for me which none but God can do.

(2dly,) That the entire person of Christ, as God and man, is the immediate object of our faith herein. The divine nature is the reason of it; but his divine person is the object of it. In placing our faith on him, we consider him as God and man in one and the same person. We believe in him because he is God; but we believe in him as he is God and man in one person.

And this consideration of the person of Christ -- namely, as he is God and man -- in our acting of faith on him, is that which renders it peculiar, and limits or determines it unto his person, because he only is so; -- the Father is not, nor the Holy Spirit. That faith which hath the person of God and man for its object, is peculiarly and distinctly placed on Christ.

(3dly,) The motives unto this distinct acting of faith on his person are always to be considered as those also which render this faith peculiar. For the things which Christ hath done for us, which are the motives of our faith in him, were peculiar unto him alone; as in the place before quoted, Gal. ii. 20. Such are all the works of his mediation, with all the fruits of them, whereof we are made partakers. So God, in the first command, wherein he requires all faith, love, and obedience from the church, enforced it with the consideration of a signal benefit which it had received, and therein a type of all spiritual and eternal mercies, Exod. xx. 2, 3. Hence two things are evident, which clearly state this matter.

[1st,] That faith which we place upon and the honour which we give thereby unto the person of Christ, is equally placed on and honour equally given thereby unto the other persons of the Father 132and the Holy Spirit, with respect unto that nature which is the formal reason and cause of it. But it is peculiarly fixed on Christ, with respect unto his person as God and man, and the motives unto it, in the acts and benefits of his mediation.

[2dly,] All of Christ is considered and glorified in this acting of faith on him; -- his divine nature, as the formal cause of it; his divine entire person, God and man, as its proper object; and the benefits of his mediation, as the especial motives thereunto.

This faith in the person of Christ is the spring and fountain of our spiritual life. We live by the faith of the Son of God. In and by the actings hereof is it preserved, increased, and strengthened. "For he is our life," Col. iii. 4; and all supplies of it are derived from him, by the acting of faith in him. We receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified, "by the faith that is in him," Acts xxvi. 18. Hereby do we abide in him; without which we can do nothing, John xv. 5. Hereby is our peace with God maintained -- "For he is our peace," Eph. ii. 14; and in him we have peace, according to his promise, John xvi. 33. All strength for the mortification of sin, for the conquest of temptations -- all our increase and growth in grace -- depend on the constant actings of this faith in him.

The way and method of this faith is that which we have described. A due apprehension of the love of Christ, with the effects of it in his whole mediatory work on our behalf -- especially in his giving himself for us, and our redemption by his blood -- is the great motive thereunto. They whose hearts are not deeply affected herewith, can never believe in him in a due manner. "I live," saith the apostle, "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Unless a sense hereof be firmly implanted in our souls, unless we are deeply affected with it, our faith in him would be weak and wavering, or rather none at all. The due remembrance of what the blessed Lord Jesus hath done for us, of the ineffable love which was the spring, cause, and fountain of what he so did -- thoughts of the mercy, grace, peace, and glory which he hath procured thereby -- are the great and unconquerable motives to fix our faith, hope, trust, and confidence in him.

His divine nature is the ground and warranty for our so doing. This is that from whence he is the due and proper object of all divine faith and worship. From the power and virtue thereof do we expect and receive all those things which in our believing on him we seek after; for none but God can bestow them on us, or work them in us. There is in all the acting of our faith on him, the voice of the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

His divine person, wherein he is God and man, wherein he hath that nature which is the formal object of divine worship, and wherein he wrought all those things which are the motives thereunto, is the object of this faith; which gives its difference and distinction from faith in God in general, and faith in the person of the Father, as the fountain of grace, love, and power.

Secondly, Faith is acted on Christ under the formal notion of mediator between God and man. So it is expressed, 1 Peter i. 21, "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." And this acting of faith towards Christ is not contrary unto that before described, nor inconsistent with it, though it be distinct from it. To deny the person of Christ to fall under this double consideration -- of a divine person absolutely, wherein he is "over all, God blessed for ever," and, as manifested in the flesh, exercising the office of mediator between God and man -- is to renounce the Gospel. And according unto the variety of these respects, so are the acting of faith various; some on him absolutely, on the motives of his mediation; some on him as mediator only. And how necessary this variety is unto the life, supportment, and comfort of believers, they all know in some measure who are so. See our exposition on Heb. i. 1-3. Sometimes faith considers him as on the throne; sometimes as standing at the right hand of God; sometimes as the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Sometimes his glorious power, sometimes his infinite condescension, is their relief.

Wherefore, in the sense now intended, he is considered as the ordinance, as the servant of God, "who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory." So our faith respects not only his person, but all the acts of his office. It is faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. It is the will of God, that we should place our faith and

trust in him and them, as the only means of our acceptance with him -- of all grace and glory from him. This is the proper notion of a mediator. So is he not the ultimate object of our faith, wherein it rests, but God through him. "Through him have we access by one Spirit unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18. So he is the way whereby we go to God, John xiv. 6; see Heb. x. 19-22. And this so is faith in him; because he is the immediate, though not the ultimate, object of it, Acts xxvi. 18.

This is that which renders our faith in God evangelical. The especial nature of it ariseth from our respect unto God in Christ, and through him. And herein faith principally regards Christ in the discharge of his sacerdotal office. For although it is also the principle of all obedience unto him in his other offices, yet as unto fixing our faith in God through him, it is his sacerdotal office and the effects of it that we rest upon and trust unto. It is through him as the high priest over the house of God, as he who hath made for us a new and living way into the holy place, that we draw nigh to God, Heb. iv. 14-16, x. 19-22; 1 John i. 3.

No comfortable, refreshing thoughts of God, no warrantable or acceptable boldness in an approach and access unto him, can any one entertain or receive, but in this exercise of faith on Christ as the mediator between God and man. And if, in the practice of religion, this regard of faith unto him -- this acting of faith on God through him -- be not the principle whereby the whole is animated and guided, Christianity is renounced, and the vain cloud of natural religion embraced in the room of it. Not a verbal mention of Him, but the real intention of heart to come unto God by him, is required of us; and thereinto all expectation of acceptance with God, as unto our persons or duties, is resolved.

We have had great endeavours of late, by the Socinians, to set forth and adorn a natural religion; as if it were sufficient unto all ends of our living unto God. But as most of its pretended ornaments are stolen from the Gospel, or are framed in an emanation of light from it, such as nature of itself could not rise unto; so the whole proceeds from a dislike of the mediation of Christ, and even weariness of the profession of faith in him. So is it with the minds of men who were never affected with supernatural revelations, with the mystery of the Gospel, beyond the owning of some notions of truth -- who never had experience of its power in the life of God.

But here lies the trial of faith truly evangelical. Its steady beholding of the Sun of Righteousness proves it genuine and from above. And let them take heed who find their heart remiss or cold in this exercise of it. When men begin to satisfy themselves with general hopes of mercy in God, without a continual respect unto the interposition and mediation of Christ, whereinto their hope and trust is resolved, there is a decay in their faith, and proportionally in all other evangelical graces also. Herein lies the mystery of Christian religion, which the world seems to be almost weary of.

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