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THE PERSON OF CHRIST

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CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

THE great central truth of the religion of sinners relates to the person, character, work, sufferings, offices, and glory of Jesus Christ. These are vital in Christianity. As one is sound or corrupt here, so is he substantially right or wrong in the main. Both now and in the Last Day,¹ the great question in determining character and destiny is the same: “What think ye of Christ?” (Mat 22:42).

On this subject, the controversy is old...All the friends of God have at heart been on one side and all His enemies substantially on the other—if not openly, yet secretly; if not by profession, yet in practice. For eighteen hundred years, a large portion of all the heresies that have arisen have related to the Person or work of Christ. Infidelity² is most bitter against Christ, while piety³ feeds upon the truth of which He is the sum. Many scoff and more refuse, while some admire and adore. Some obey; others cry, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). In no age has malice against Christ been more envenomed⁴ than in the present.

Jesus Christ is a wonderful, a glorious person! To look away from self and one’s own works to Christ is to lay hold on eternal life. Safety consists in fleeing to Him and abiding in Him. When He is in the ascendant, the night flees away and the morning comes without clouds. His names and titles are as important as they are significant. Every one of them is as ointment poured forth. His lips drop as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under His tongue, and the smell of His garments is like the smell of Lebanon...To [His people] He is altogether lovely (Song 4:11; 5:16).

He is their Advocate, the angel of the covenant, the author and finisher of faith. He is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood; the Alpha and the Omega; the beloved, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, the bread of life, the righteous Branch, the bridegroom, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person. He is a bundle of myrrh.

To His saints, He is and is owned to be Creator, captain, Counsel-lor, covenant, cornerstone, a covert⁵ from the tempest, and the chiefest among ten thousand. He is to them as the Dew, the door into the fold, a daysman,⁶ a day star,⁷ a deliverer, a diadem, and the desire of all nations, ranks, and generations of pious men.

In their eyes, He is the Elect, Emmanuel, the everlasting Father and eternal life. He is a Fountain of living waters to thirsty souls, of joy to troubled souls, of life to dying souls. He is the foundation on which His people of all ages safely build their hopes of heaven. He is the Father of eternity, the fir tree under whose shadow the saints rejoice, the First and the Last, the first fruits of the greatest harvest ever gathered, the first-born among many brethren and the first-begotten from the dead.

To His chosen, He is as the finest gold, a guide, a governor, a glorious Lord, God, the true God, God over all blessed forever. He is the Head of the Church, the health, the hope, the husband, the heritage, the habitation of His people. He is the horn of their salvation. He rides upon the heavens by His name JAH! He is the Jehovah, the inheritance, Judge, and King of His saints. He is their light, their life, their Lord, their leader, their Lawgiver, their atoning lamb, the Lily of the Valley, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

He is the Man Christ Jesus, the Master, the Mediator, the messenger of the covenant, the minister of the true sanctuary, “which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb 8:2). He is the mighty God of Isaiah...the bright and morning star of John, and the Messiah of all the prophets.

He is the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14). He is at once the root and the offspring of David. He is the Peace, the prince, the priest, the prophet, the potentate, the purifier, the propitiation⁸

¹ See FGB 210, *Day of Judgment*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² **infidelity** – disbelief in the truths of Christianity.

³ **piety** – reverence and obedience to God; godliness.

⁴ **envenomed** – bitter; hostile.

⁵ **covert** – shelter; hiding-place.

⁶ **daysman** – mediator; go-between; cf. Job 9:33.

⁷ **day star** – morning star; cf. Numbers 24:17.

for our sins, the physician of souls, the plant of renown, the power of God unto salvation, the Passover of all saints. He is a polished shaft in the quiver of God.

He is the Rock, the refuge, the ruler, the ransom, the refiner, the Redeemer, the righteousness, and the resurrection of all that walk in white. He is the rose of Sharon. He is the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, the stem of Jesse, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the shield, the strength, the surety, the Shiloh, the sacrifice, the sanctuary, the salvation, the sanctification, and the Sun of righteousness to all believers.

He is that holy thing that was born of Mary (Luk 1:35). He is the truth, the treasure, the teacher, the temple, the tree of life, the great testator⁹ of His Church. He is the Way, the well of salvation, the Word of God, the wisdom of God, the faithful witness. He is [called] *Wonderful* (Isa 9:6).

His person is one; His natures are two. He is both human and divine, finite and infinite, created and uncreated. He was before Abraham, though not born for ages after that patriarch slept with his fathers. He was dead; and behold, He is alive for evermore (Rev 1:18).

On earth, He had not where to lay His head; yet He disposes of all diadems. By Him, kings rule and princes decree justice. He has the arm of God and the heart of a brother. To Him all tongues shall confess and all knees bow, “yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). None loves like Him, none pities like Him, none saves like Him!

It is not surprising that such a person lives and reigns in the hearts of His people. No marvel that the virgins love Him, the saints praise Him, the martyrs die for Him, and the confessors are not ashamed of Him. The believing lay fast hold of Him and will not let Him go. His frown shakes the frame of universal nature, His smile gives life, His presence converts dungeons into palaces, His blood cleanses from all sin, His righteousness is the white robe of the redeemed.

If men would be safe, wise, holy, happy, useful, strong, or victorious, let them look to JESUS, let them look to none else, let them walk in Him, abide in Him, glory in Him, and count as loss all things besides.

You may look at the Law until the spirit of bondage overwhelms you with terrors and torments. You may go about to establish your own righteousness until you can boast, sin, and perish like a Pharisee. You may weep until the fountain of your tears has gone dry. You may have all gifts, understand all mysteries, bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and yield your body to be burned (1Co 13:2-3); but all these things will not atone for sin, will do nothing toward regaining the lost favor of God, will not make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. “None but Christ, none but Christ, none but Christ!” has been the cry of the faithful witnesses of all ages when truth has triumphed, when oracles were struck dumb, when sinners were converted, when saints shouted for joy, when the Word of God mightily grew and prevailed!

True piety begins, continues, and is perfected by our union with Christ.¹⁰ We are cleansed through His blood, we are clothed in His righteousness, we are purified by His Spirit. We meet the demands of the Law of this day of grace when we walk as He walked and have the same mind that was in Him. In proportion as men are truly pious, they make Him the foundation and the top stone, the sum and substance, and center of all their hopes and rejoicings before God. He is accepted and believed on in the world, not merely because there is no other Savior, but because His way of saving sinners precisely suits their case and because it brings glory to God in the highest. The true believer not only trusts in Christ but also makes his boast in Him. He not only makes mention of Him, He admits none into comparison with Him. To all the ends, parts, and purposes of salvation, Christ stands alone. There is none like Him, there is none with Him, there is none before Him, there is none after Him, there is none beside Him. He had no predecessor; He has and shall have no successor. He has no vicegerent;¹¹ He has no assistant; He wears an undivided crown and wields a perfect sovereignty over an undivided kingdom. If God’s people exalt Him above all others, so does His holy and eternal Father. If they crown Him Lord of all, God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name. If they surpassingly admire and extol¹² Him, there is cause for this preference. It is a holy, reasonable thing to fall before Him and cry, “My Lord and my God” (Joh 20:28). If He is the delight of the sons of men, He is also the delight of His Father. Listen to the voice from the excellent glory: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17).

⁸ **propitiation** – a sin offering that turns away wrath; an appeasement.

⁹ **testator** – one who makes a will or covenant.

¹⁰ See FGB 214, *Union with Christ*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹¹ **vicegerent** – one who acts in place of a ruler.

¹² **extol** – praise.

We sadly err when we begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; when we regard Christ as the Author, but not as the Finisher, of our faith. A legal spirit is the bane¹³ of piety. It is as great a foe to holy comfort as it is to gospel grace. Through the Law, believers are dead to the Law that they may live unto God (Gal 2:19). This is the evangelical plan. Here is the secret of growing conformity to God. Here is power, here is life, here is wisdom. We are complete in Him.

In the wars of opinion, the greatest contests ever known have been on the question whether Christ is the sole and sufficient cause of salvation to men. Strange that any who have God's Word should be at a loss on this subject. The language of Scripture could not be clearer: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom 10:4). This is the sum of inspired teachings on the subject. This doctrine is quite beyond the suggestion of human wit, but wholly accordant with right reason. The gospel is not the progeny¹⁴ of human wisdom, but it is the proper remedy for human woes. The heart of man is strongly wedded to a plan that will not abase pride nor silence boasting. Although in regeneration folly is so far cured that the soul reclines upon Jesus, yet even the converted sometimes fall into sad declensions¹⁵ and lose their clear and lively apprehensions of the one way of salvation provided by God. Then follow darkness, dejection, and strange perplexities.¹⁶ They are then "bewitched" (Gal 3:1) and obey not the truth.

Christ is our life: severed from Him, we are withered branches. It is only when Christ is clearly seen and cordially embraced that our peace is like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. The entire Christian race is run by pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. All the acts of faith are the fruit of the Spirit; the object of them all is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; the warrant of them all is the promise of God, the [call] of the gospel: and while they utterly renounce self, they bring Christ into the soul, the hope of glory.

Oh, that men would learn that Mount Sinai is far from Jerusalem, and that Calvary is hard by¹⁷ it. The nearer we are to the Law as a covenant of life, the farther we are from Christ, from deliverance. The hosts of saints who have finished their course and gone home to God all found in themselves sin, guilt, folly, misery, and helplessness, while in Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom, grace, and glory...

This subject suggests a few remarks to two classes of persons:

1. To Christians: In [believing on] Christ, you acted wisely. Exquisite suffering for Him is better than exquisite enjoyment with the world. It is better to be a prisoner for Him than a prince without Him. To die in Christ is to fall asleep in Jesus and be forever with the Lord. Hold fast your profession of His name. Stick to Him, stand up for Him, live unto Him, look to Him, be ready to die for Him, let your desires center in Him, let your motives to holy living be drawn from Him, let your sorrows be sanctified by Him, let your joys be heightened, chastened, sweetened by Him! Keep to Him alone. We are as much bound to believe that there is but one Mediator¹⁸ as that there is but one God (1Ti 2:5). None else can do us any good. Devotion to Christ cannot be excessive. Many love, serve, trust, and praise Him too little; but whoever loved, served, trusted, or praised Him too much? "There is no love of duty where there is no love to Christ."¹⁹

2. To such as have not fled to Christ and are yet in their sins: Will you not embrace the Savior? If Christ shall not be taken as your Surety, you must pay your own debt. Despise not His cross. It is the life of men. By wicked men, it was designed to be and is still esteemed the seal of infamy, the badge of ignominy.²⁰ Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. But see to it that ye follow not their wicked ways. Come to Christ! He died for [sinners]; He offered Himself without spot to God, a ransom for many, a sweet-smelling savor. Cast yourselves upon Him. Believe in Him, and the Law has no more penal demands against you. Believe in Him, and God will accept you in the Beloved. Believe in Him, and your right to the tree of life is at once complete. Believe in Him, and the sting of death is extracted. Believe in Him, and you shall have part in the first resurrection. Believe in Him, and you shall have boldness in the Day of Judgment. But reject Him a little longer, and your heart will be harder than it is now. Reject Him a little longer, and the call to light and life will reach you no more. Reject Him a little longer, and the day of grace will be gone forever. Reject Him a little longer,

¹³ **bane** – something that causes ruin or death.

¹⁴ **progeny** – offspring; product.

¹⁵ **declensions** – occasions of falling away from the standard; fallen conditions.

¹⁶ **dejection...perplexities** – depressed in spirit and puzzled conditions.

¹⁷ **hard by** – close by.

¹⁸ See FGB 183, *Christ the Mediator*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁹ Gardiner Spring, *The Contrast between Good and Bad Men*, Vol. 2, 87.

²⁰ **ignominy** – dishonor; shame.

and you will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. “There is a fearful chasm in the heart that has no love to Christ.”²¹

From *The Rock of Our Salvation*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister; gospel preacher and author of numerous books; born in Greensburg, PA.



CHRIST IN ETERNITY

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

LET us look on Christ in His relation to us before all worlds...Now it was [in eternity] that God the Father called forth His Son to perform the office of Mediator²² that in Him might be chosen all those that should be saved. Concerning this call of God the Father...the apostle is clear: “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee” (Heb 5:4-5). [The Father] called Him to this honor. Christ thrust not Himself into this office, but He came to it by the will of God the Father and by His appointment, “For it pleased the Father...by him to reconcile all things unto himself” (Col 1:19-20). “Him hath God the Father sealed” (Joh 6:27)—and why? To assure us of the good will of God to save us, seeing He hath called His Son unto it. Therefore will He accept all that Christ should do for us as that which He Himself hath ordained.

Now it was that God the Son embraced the call of the Father and undertook the office of Mediator. “Then said I, Lo, I come” (Heb 10:7). No question, it was truth from everlasting: “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back,” (Isa 50:5). And, “as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” (Joh 14:31). No sooner had the Father called, but Christ accepted the office to which He was designed by the Father...It must needs be so because whatsoever the Father wills, the Son wills also. “I and my Father are one,” saith Christ (Joh 10:30). How one? Why, one in will, one in power, and one in nature.

1. One in will: That appears in the words precedent²³ concerning Christ’s sheep: “My Father gave them me...and I give unto them eternal life” (Joh 10:28-29). They are both agreed to save Christ’s sheep. The Father is willing, and Christ is willing. Look how much the will of the Father is in it, [and] so much the will of the Son is in it. He and the Father are one.

2. One in power: That appears likewise in the words precedent: those sheep “shall never perish,” saith Christ, “neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (10:28-29). First, here is the power of Christ and all [that is] in Him engaged for the salvation of His sheep: if He [has] any power in Him and [is] able to do anything, not one of them shall perish! He gives the reason of the prevalence of His power from His Father’s power, [which is] engaged as much as His own in this business. They are alike fast²⁴ in *His* hands and in His *Father’s* hands. He and the Father are one.

3. One in nature: Of this, I suppose, are the words more especially understood: the Father and the Son are both of one nature, of one essence, of one being, and this is not only an argument that they did both agree...but that they can never disagree...So then the Father from everlasting calls the Son to the office of Mediator: “Come, My

²¹ Spring, *Contrast*, 87.

²² **Mediator** – a go-between; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto Whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (1689 London Baptist Confession 8.1)

²³ **precedent** – preceding; going before.

²⁴ **fast** – with firm grip; securely.

Son, the Son of My joy and high delight, My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased! There is a thought in My heart to communicate Myself out of this everlasting aloneness into something else. My thoughts, purpose, or intention lies in this order: First, I intend My own glory, then Christ, then the Church, then the world...Next to My glory and the manifestation of it, I will have a Christ, and this Christ shall be the chief pattern of the election of grace. Next to Christ the Head, I intend a body,²⁵ and this body I will predestinate²⁶ to be made like or to be conformed to the image of My Son. Now, behold, I call Thee to the office of Mediator: Thou art My Son; today (even in this day of eternity) have I begotten Thee; and today (even this day of eternity) do I call Thee to this honor to be a high priest forever.”

As the Father calls, so the Son from everlasting accepts the office to which the Father designs Him: “Is that the voice of My everlasting Father? Why, ‘Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.’ This is My mind; yea, and this shall be My mind forever. When I am incarnate,²⁷ this shall be My meat: to do the will of Him that sent Me to finish His work. Glorious Father, Thy will is My will. I seek not Mine own will—as if I had a will distinct from Thine—but the will of My Father. Now therefore I accept this honor. Be it to Me...even as Thou pleasest” (Psa 40:7; Heb 10:7; Joh 4:34; 5:30)...

But concerning the particular passages of these treaties between God and Christ to save souls, I shall show, 1. The Project, 2. The Counsel...We shall find all these in our first period, in eternity before all times until the creation.

1. The Project...First, God intends His own glory, then Christ, then the elect, then the world...Here then is the project: *God will glorify His grace*. To this end, He will predestinate Christ. In Christ, He will choose some of the sons of men to salvation, whom, notwithstanding sin, He will make holy and without blame before Him in love. This project or plot²⁸ or design of God will be further enlarged upon in the next passage, i.e., His counsels.

2. The Counsel: Of the counsels of God concerning man before all worlds, we read in several texts [that] Christ was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Act 2: 23). “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Act 4:27-28). Thus the members of Christ are said to “have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). Of this counsel of God’s will, we know but little now; yet this will be made known when we come to glory...In the meantime, thus far we may know, for thus far He hath revealed Himself concerning His counsels about man from everlasting:

1. That man should be a reasonable²⁹ creature. Because every creature is unavoidably subject to the Creator—for He made all things for himself (Pro 16:4), and all are to return that glory to Him for which He made them—man should therefore serve Him as all other creatures must. Only his service should be after a reasonable manner...

2. If man should deviate from this reasonable service and break the law that God would give, which he himself should have an original power to perform, then he should incur the displeasure of God, and such a curse and such a penalty should be inflicted...

3. That sin should not pass unrevenged and for these reasons: (1) Because of God’s infinite hatred thereof: He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, He cannot look on iniquity (Hab 1:13). It provokes a nausea and abhorrence in Him: “For all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD” (Zec 8:17)—“They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them” (Isa 1:14). (2) Because of His truth, He hath said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” or “thou shalt dying die” (Gen 2:17)—die temporally, die eternally. Surely, in no wise will God abolish His Law: “One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled” (Mat 5:18)...Upon these reasons, God is resolved [that] sin shall not pass unrevenged, lest thereby His justice should be surely abused, His hatred against sin the less declared, His truth questioned, and His dreadful majesty neglected by men.

4. That, notwithstanding sin, every man should not be destroyed and for these reasons: (1) Because of the infinite delight that the Lord hath in mercy: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Mic 7:18)...(2) Because of the delight that God hath to be actively glorified by His creatures’ voluntary service and subjection: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (Joh 15:8)...Adam fell, [and] all

²⁵ **body** – Christ’s Church.

²⁶ **predestinate** – appointed beforehand by the eternal purpose of God.

²⁷ **incarnate** – possessing flesh and full human nature.

²⁸ **plot** – plan for accomplishing anything; purpose.

²⁹ **reasonable** – having the ability to think; endowed with reason.

mankind fell in him, so that there was no tree in this paradise left to bring forth any fruit unto God. This is most certain: God would rather have His trees for fruit than for fuel. Hence, He resolved that mankind, notwithstanding sin, should not be destroyed.

Hereupon³⁰ the Trinity calls a council, and the question is, “What is to be done with poor man?³¹”...Jesus is resolved on, one of the same blessed Trinity, Who by His Father’s ordination, His own voluntary susception,³² and the Holy Spirit’s sanctification, should be fitted for the business. To this purpose, Jesus should be both a surety³³ and a head over sinful men: a surety to pay men’s debts unto God and a head to restore God’s image unto man. Thus, in Him “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa 85:10).

This is the great mystery of the gospel! This is what the angels (as I tell you) pry into (1Pe 1:12)! Nay, this too is what the angels and saints shall admire and bless God for to all eternity! This is what set the infinite wisdom of God [to] work from all eternity. If all the angels in heaven and all the men in the world had been put to it³⁴ to find a way to answer this question, “How shall sin be pardoned, the sinner reconciled, and God glorify His justice?” they could never have done it. This cost God dearly! It cost Him the heart-blood of His own Son, and that is a sure sign that God’s heart was much in it. Indeed, we are not Christians until, [in] some measure, we see and have our hearts taken with the glory of God in this mystery! O the wonder of heaven and earth! Here is the case: man is fallen through sin; and ever since the fall, man and sin are as inseparably joined as fire and heat. Yet God will have mercy on the man, and He will take vengeance on the sin. The eternal wisdom of God hath found out a way to translate this man’s sins on another Person³⁵ Who is able to bear them and to interest this man’s person in Another’s righteousness that is able to cover him...All this is done in our Jesus. On Him was executed the curse of the Law, by Him was fulfilled the righteousness of the Law, for Him was remitted the sin of man, and through Him were all things made new again.

The world was in Christ as in its Surety, making satisfaction to the justice of God; and God was in Christ, as in His ambassador, reconciling the world unto Himself again...“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33).

From *Looking unto Jesus*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664): Anglican, then Presbyterian minister; known for his exceptionally holy life; born in Ormskirk, Lancashire, England.



This is the basis of the Christian religion, a fundamental article of it: without the belief of it, no man can be a Christian. “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (1Jo 4:2), is born of God, belongs to Him, and is on the side of God and truth.—*John Gill*

CHRIST IS THE WORD MADE FLESH

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

CHURCH history shows very clearly—indeed, before you come to Church history, the New Testament itself shows us—that the devil is concerned about nothing more than to lead people astray with regard to the Person and the work of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is why we can take no risks, and we cannot content ourselves with a mere general statement of the doctrine of the incarnation.³⁶ We must break it up

³⁰ **hereupon** – immediately after this.

³¹ **poor man** – man in the state of depravity and sinfulness.

³² **susception** – acceptance; the act of taking something upon oneself.

³³ **surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another; as our Surety, Christ guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin and our deliverance upon His payment of our debt upon Calvary’s cross.

³⁴ **put to it** – hard pressed.

³⁵ See FGB 207, *Substitution*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³⁶ **incarnation** – Latin: *incarnatio* “taking on flesh”; “The act whereby the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, without ceasing to be what He is, God the Son, took into union with Himself what He before that act did not possess, a human nature, ‘and so [He] was and con-

and analyze it: we must show what it does and what it does not say, lest any of us should inadvertently fall into error.

I propose, therefore, to make the following series of statements. The first is this:

The doctrine of the Person of our Lord and the doctrine of the incarnation in particular show us again the all-importance of the doctrine of the Trinity...The whole Christian position, in a sense, depends upon the doctrine of the blessed Holy Trinity. If we do not believe in that, we cannot be Christian; *it is impossible*. Someone who does not believe in the Trinity cannot be a Christian because he cannot believe in the doctrine of redemption. Therefore, as we talk about the person of the Son, we see how important it is always to realize that God exists in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The second statement is that the doctrine of the incarnation asserts not that the eternal triune God became flesh, but that the Second Person in the triune God became flesh.³⁷ The Scripture puts it like this: “The Word was made flesh” (Joh 1:14). Now this is surely something that we must emphasize. We often speak rather loosely, I am afraid, in talking about the incarnation; and many of our hymns tend to do the same thing. But to me it seems always to be wise not to say that God became man. That is a loose statement that we had better not use. We often do say that, but believing as we do in the Persons of the Trinity, what we should say is that the Second Person in the Trinity was made flesh and appeared as man. If we merely say, “God became man,” then we may be saying something that is quite wrong, and if people believe something wrong as the result of our statement, we cannot really blame them. We must be particular, we must be specific, and we should always be careful what we say.

The third statement is that the doctrine of the incarnation does not say that it was merely an appearance or a form that was taken on by the Second Person in the Trinity, but that it was indeed a true incarnation. He did come in the flesh. I emphasize that because in the very early years of the Christian Church, there were people who went into errors and into heresy about this. The so-called Gnostics³⁸ said that our Lord had the mere appearance of flesh; He had a phantom³⁹ body, an appearance of a body. But the doctrine of the incarnation does not say that. It says it was not an appearance, it was real; it was a true incarnation; the Word *was made flesh* and dwelt among us.

Point number four is again a negative one. The doctrine of the incarnation does not say that it was merely the divine nature that somehow became united with human nature and so formed a person. It is not that: it was the Second Person Himself, the Person, Who became flesh. Now there were many in the early ages of the Church, and they have persisted throughout the centuries, who have not understood that. Their view of Jesus Christ is of divine nature and human nature forming a new person. That is not the truth. It was the second, eternal Person in the Trinity Who took human nature. You see the significance of that?...The doctrine of the incarnation does not teach the creation of a new person. It teaches that He took on to Himself flesh and appeared in this world in the likeness of man—not a new person, but this eternal Person.

So the next point, then, is that the doctrine of the incarnation does not teach, neither does it involve the idea, that a change took place in the personality of the Son of God. There was a change in the form in which He appeared, there was a change in the state in which He manifested Himself, but there was no change in His personality. He is the same Person always. In the womb of the Virgin Mary and lying as a helpless babe in the manger, He is still the Second Person in the Holy Trinity.

The next definition I put like this: we must never so state the doctrine of the incarnation as to give the impression, therefore, that we say that the Son of God was *changed* into a man. That is why that phrase about God becoming man is misleading. We have seen that John 1:14 says, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” and that very phrase “was made” has often caused people to think that the Son of God was *changed* into a man...Instead of saying, “The Word was made flesh,” what we really mean is that He *became* flesh, or that He *took on* flesh. The idea of “making” gives the impression of being “changed into,” but that is wrong.

tinues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person, forever’ (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 21).” (Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 601)

³⁷ This is the doctrine referred to as the *Hypostatic Union*: “The doctrine of the hypostatic union, first set forth officially in the definition of faith produced by the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), concerns the union of the two natures of deity and humanity in the one *hypostasis* or person of Jesus Christ. It can be stated as follows: In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion, so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man.” (Elwell, 583)

³⁸ **Gnostics** – followers of Gnosticism (from Greek *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”), a group of second and third century heresies that taught escape from the material world through gaining secret knowledge.

³⁹ **phantom** – ghost; a thing sensed but having no physical reality.

In other words, the way in which the Scripture generally puts it is this: in Romans 8:3, we are told that He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” That is better. Or take it as it is put in 1 John 4:2: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” Jesus Christ has not been changed into a man; it is this eternal Person Who has come in the flesh. That is the right way to put it.

The next principle is that our Lord did not merely take the *appearance* of human nature: it was true human nature. Let me explain. We have accounts in the Old Testament of angels appearing to various people, and we are told that they appeared in human form. Now when we say that the angels appeared in that way, we are not talking about an incarnation, but an *appearance*. The angels did not change their nature, they did not add to it in any way; they just took on that form. Indeed...our Lord Himself appeared in that way; we spoke about the Angel of the Covenant. The Angel of the Covenant in the Old Testament is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and He appeared more than once to various people in the form of a man. That is what we call a *theophany*. Now theophany is entirely different from incarnation. Theophany means that an angelic or a divine person appears in this form for the time being, but the doctrine of the incarnation asserts that the Lord Jesus Christ has taken on human nature itself—not its *appearance*, but real human nature.

Many statements say that; let me give you two. Hebrews 2:14: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” He really did take unto Himself human nature. “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels,” says verse 16 of that same chapter, but He “took on him the seed of Abraham.” That is what He has taken on. Take also 2 John 7 where we read, “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” There is no doubt at all but that John wrote his three epistles in order to counter the dangerous heresy that had arisen, and which denied that He really had come in the flesh, asserting that it was a mere appearance. Some said that the Messiah entered into this man Jesus at His baptism and left Him on the cross, while others said that the whole thing was a phantom. Now the New Testament—John especially in his epistles—not only denies that, but denounces it as being the most dangerous error, the very lie of the antichrist; therefore we must be certain that we are clear about these things. That brings me to the next statement.

The doctrine of the incarnation asserts that our Lord took unto Himself a full human nature. It was not merely partial: it was complete. He did not merely take a body to Himself. There have been people throughout the centuries who have taught that; they say that the Son of God only took on a human body. That is wrong. Others say that He took on a body and a kind of animal soul, but that the spiritual part of the soul was provided by the eternal Person. That is wrong also. The doctrine of the incarnation teaches that He took on Him *complete* human nature, body and soul, including spirit, that He was truly man. I shall have to emphasize this again, but it has to be stressed at this point.

My last point under this general heading is that He took on this complete human nature from the Virgin Mary. That means that we must not say that a new human nature was created for Him. Some people have taught that God created a new human nature for His Son, and that this human nature merely passed, as it were, through Mary. That is wrong. The doctrine states that He derived His human nature *from* His mother, the Virgin Mary. It was not a new creation. He did not bring His human nature with Him. He received it from her. Therefore, as the Scripture often emphasizes, He is truly of the seed of Abraham and of the seed of David. Here it is in Matthew 1:1: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Now if a special human nature had been created for Him, He would not have been the son of David or the son of Abraham. But He was both because His human nature came from His mother, the Virgin Mary. Again, let me emphasize that what He had was not a human nature that was merely like ours but not really a part of ours, not organically related to us. He actually did receive our nature. Go back again to those verses in Hebrews 2:14-18. He really does belong, therefore, to the human race: He is one with us.

Now I must not stop with this, tempted as I am to do so. I am concerned about it because the doctrine of our redemption ultimately depends upon it. If He had not taken our human nature, He could not have saved us. As Hebrews 2 argues so clearly, because we are partakers of this flesh and blood, He had to partake of the same. It was the only way in which He could save us. So we cannot afford to take any risks about this doctrine. We cannot afford to say, “It does not matter what your precise statement is.” That is to be utterly unscriptural. We must be precise and clear and certain and definite in all our statements; otherwise, without knowing it, we may make the doctrine of our own redemption quite impossible.

So, having established that, we now return to the mystery of the incarnation; and at once, the question arises: How did all this come to pass? How did this extraordinary thing become actual? And that, of course, leads us immediately to the doctrine of the virgin birth...What is this? Well, the Apostles’ Creed, the first creed of all, the

first great confession, puts it like this: “He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.” Now here is, again, one of those great subjects that is full of mystery: it is a doctrine that has been much debated and argued about and misunderstood and frequently denied; and people seem to find great difficulty with it...They are in trouble about the doctrine of the incarnation because they set up their puny minds as the ultimate test of all truth, and because when they cannot understand a thing they will not believe it.

But surely, we must agree that in all these matters we are outside the realm of natural human reason and understanding...We know nothing apart from [revelation]. I do not put forward theories and philosophies; I start on this premise—that what I am announcing is what God has done, what God has revealed. I know nothing apart from what I find in the Bible. I am entirely shut up to it; I am utterly dependent upon it. Therefore, it is my business to come to it as a little child. “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1Co 1:21); so, if that was true and is still true, then I must depend upon this book, I must accept its authority, I must receive its statements, even though my little mind cannot always understand them. That is the frame of mind and the appropriate attitude to adopt as we come to consider this extraordinary and amazing and yet glorious doctrine of the virgin birth.

What, then, do the Scriptures teach? What are we told? There are two portions of Scripture that are the basis of the doctrine of the virgin birth. I always feel one should start with the statement in Luke 1:26-38 because it gives us the announcement to Mary of the great thing itself. Notice the details in connection with that announcement; notice the facts, and how the angel came...Notice, too, what we are told about Mary’s surprise, which of course was quite natural. It is obvious, is it not, from her very surprise that she understood the significance of what the angel said to her. Here was an unmarried woman, a virgin, to whom this announcement was made; and at once, she saw the difficulty and did not hesitate to express it. How could she be the mother of a child when she had never known a man? The angel gave her the explanation. He announced to her that this was something that was going to be done by the Holy Spirit Himself. He told her that she would be “overshadowed” by the Almighty: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35). “Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,” says the Apostles’ Creed.

But then the account in the first chapter of Matthew, from verses 18-25, is equally important, and, surely, equally interesting, because there we are told what happened to Joseph. Joseph discovered that this virgin to whom he was betrothed was with child. He was confused and unhappy. He was a good man, a righteous and a loving man. He decided he would not make a public example of Mary, but he must of necessity put her away, or he would not be keeping the Law. So he was pondering about all this and about how he could do it, when the angel appeared to him in a dream. What the angel did, of course, was explain to Joseph what was happening: “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Mat 1:20). He was given exactly the same explanation; and as we read the story, I am afraid we often forget to observe the extraordinary faith of Joseph. He believed the angel’s message; he accepted it without any demur, without any hesitation, and he proceeded to act upon it.

That is what we are told in the record, and it teaches us that the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ as a man is entirely the work of God. The doctrine of the virgin birth must always be considered first and foremost in a negative way, and what it says negatively is that He had no earthly father. He was not born of the will of man nor of the will or the energy of the flesh. Let me put it still more strongly. The male human being did not enter into the question of His conception.

Now that is a very remarkable thing because...the glory of God, as it were, is in the man, and the woman is under the man. You remember how we worked that out. But here the man is put on one side; he has nothing to do with it. You notice that the very word, the promise that was given by God to the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden was this: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head” (Gen 3:15). And so it proved. The man had nothing to do with it—the very one whom God had appointed lord of creation, and to whom He gave power over the woman, and to whom the woman is subject by God’s own desire and ordination, as the result of creation and especially as the result of the fall. In spite of all that, when it came to the question of the incarnation, the male was put on one side and God used the woman only.

Surely, then, the significance and importance of that must be obvious to all—it is to emphasize again the total inability of man. Man, in the person of Joseph, is seen in his utter failure and incapacity. God took hold of human nature at its weakest, as it were, in order to produce out of it this human nature for His own Son. I have come across a very beautiful phrase that I think will help you to remember this: “As the Lord’s divine nature had no mother, so His human nature had no father.” I think that puts it very well. It was entirely the work of God. He took on Him human nature from Mary, but it was done through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit.

“What happened?” asks someone. I cannot answer; no one can answer. That is the great mystery. But what we know is that the power of the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and out of Mary, out of a cell in her body, the human nature of our Lord was made. We cannot go further. It is a great mystery. But we have to go as far as that. It was the operation of the Holy Spirit, and it was obviously done in such a way that this human nature that the Son took unto Himself was sinless—you notice that the angel spoke to Mary of “that holy thing [that sinless, pure thing] which shall be born of thee...” (Luke 1:35). This does not mean that Mary herself was made sinless and holy. It does not even of necessity imply that any part of Mary was. All we know is that something was taken, was cleansed, and rendered free from all pollution so that His human nature was sinless and entirely free from all the effects and results of the fall. Such was the effect of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon her.

What, then, of this doctrine? What have we to say about it in general, especially having in mind those who find it difficult? I would suggest once more that it is a doctrine that is quite inevitable if you really do believe the doctrine of the incarnation. If you really do believe that the babe in the manger in Bethlehem is the Second Person in the Trinity—and that is the truth—then I cannot see that there is any difficulty about this doctrine of the virgin birth. Indeed, I would find myself in much greater difficulty if I did not have the doctrine of the virgin birth to believe. You see, the fact of the incarnation is so unusual, so exceptional, so miraculous and mysterious that I would expect everything about Him to be the same; and so it proved to be. To put it another way: the virgin birth was the sign of the mystery of the incarnation. It was a kind of symbol of that mystery. There it was in a tangible form—this virgin birth.

Everything about our Lord is mysterious. His coming into the world was mysterious. His going out of it was mysterious. He did not enter into life like anybody else; He did not go out of it like anybody else. The resurrection was as unique as the virgin birth. It had never happened to anybody before. He is the “first begotten of the dead” (Rev 1:5); “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). The resurrection was equally startling. So I would say to anybody who stumbles at the virgin birth: Do you stumble in the same way at the resurrection? You see, if we start with the doctrine of the incarnation and realize what we are saying, if we realize that we are really speaking about the Second Person in the Trinity, then surely you would expect His birth to be entirely unusual and exceptional? And so it was. He was exceptional from beginning to end.

But let me try to help you by putting it like this: If you do not believe in the doctrine of the virgin birth, how do you account for His sinlessness? Are we not entitled to put it like this: If He had been born in the ordinary way, of a father and a mother, then surely He would have been like every other person; He would have been in direct sequence, in the direct line, from Adam, and therefore it would be true to say of Him also “as in Adam all die” (1Co 15:22). He would have died in Adam, and He would have been guilty of original sin and of original guilt.

But the doctrine of the incarnation at once tells us that that is not what happened. A person, I repeat, did not come into being there. This person was the eternal Person, the Second Person in the Trinity. When a husband and a wife come together and a child is born, a new person, a new personality, comes into being. That did not happen in the incarnation. But given a father and a mother, you would have a person in the direct line from Adam and therefore sinful and fallen. The only way to have prevented that would be to say that some similar kind of operation to that performed by the Holy Spirit on Mary should also have had to be performed on Joseph.

But surely, that does not help us. If you are already in difficulties about this miraculous operation on Mary, then you are doubting it; and it is still more impossible. No, if we really took a firm hold of the doctrine of the incarnation itself, that this blessed Person took unto Himself human nature that had to be sinless because He could not unite with anything that was sinful, then there was only one way for it, and that is that He had to be born not in the ordinary way of generation, but in this special way.

You will notice that the whole doctrine is surrounded by pitfalls and difficulties because when I put it like that, I am sure that many will think, “Ah, I see! God created a special human nature for Him, did He?” No, He did not! I have already denounced that as heresy. He got His human nature from Mary, but it was acted upon by the Holy Spirit in such a way that it was rendered wholly free from sin and from all pollution.

And so we stand before Him. We stand before this mystery of godliness, God in the flesh! The strangest, the most amazing thing that has ever happened—indeed, I do not hesitate to say, the supreme act of God. It is so supreme that I expect it to be unusual in every respect, and I find the Scriptures tell me that it was. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, He was born of a virgin named Mary. Man was entirely excluded; the male did not come in. Joseph is there ever to remind us of that. It was entirely the work of God. And let us realize and remember that it all happened so that we might be saved, that our sins might be forgiven. The Son of God became man that the children of men might become children of God.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Well-known expository preacher and minister of Westminster Chapel, London, England, 1938-68; born in Wales, UK.



CHRIST IS GOD

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

THE design of this chapter is to state and prove the doctrine of the true, proper, and supreme divinity⁴⁰ of the Lord Jesus Christ. His Godhead is true, not fictitious; it is proper, not figurative; it is supreme, not merely superangelic.⁴¹ None is divine in a higher sense than the Savior of lost men is. The proofs of this truth are various, multiform,⁴² and abundant.

I. THE NAMES OF GOD ARE, IN SCRIPTURE, GIVEN TO JESUS CHRIST. One apostle says of Him, “This is the true God, and eternal life” (1Jo 5:20). Speaking of the Israelites, another apostle says, “Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5). In both Testaments, He is called Immanuel, which means “God with us” (Isa 7:14; Mat 1:23). Speaking of Him, Paul says, “God was manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16). The evangelical prophet calls Him “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6). Peter says, “He is Lord of all” (Act 10:36). Paul says, “He is the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8). Both Isaiah and Joel call Him by the awful and incommunicable name, *Jehovah* (Isa 6:5-10 *cf.* Joh 12:39-41; Joe 2:32 *cf.* Act 2:21; Rom 10:13). The Bible styles our Savior [as] God, the true God, God blessed forever, Lord of all, Lord of glory, God with us, Jehovah, Lord of hosts. This language is used by prophets and apostles at periods long separated and on occasions very diverse—some before His birth, others at His birth, and others after His ascension to glory. Surely, God’s Word thus teaches that He is divine.

Lord Jesus, Thou God over all, Thou Jehovah of hosts, be Thou our Friend. Bless and help each one of us. Be unto us a horn of salvation.

II. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES ARE ALSO ASCRIBED TO HIM. Eternity⁴³ is one of His perfections: “In the beginning was the Word” (Joh 1:1). John the Baptist was born six months before our Lord, yet of our Savior he says, “He was before me” (Joh 1:15)...When on earth, He asserted His own eternity and self-existence: “Before Abraham was, I am” (Joh 8:58). More than sixty years after His ascension⁴⁴ from Olivet and within eight verses of the close of the New Testament, Jesus says of Himself, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Rev 22:13). He Who is Himself the Alpha, the first, the beginning, must be self-existent, independent, and eternal. Surely He Who can truly thus speak of Himself is divine.

⁴⁰ **EDITOR’S NOTE:** Theological writers often use *deity* and *divinity* synonymously. However, many antitrinitarian writers use *divinity* to say that Christ is like God, but is not God in essence. *Deity* seems to be the stronger term, though both are legitimate.

W. G. T. Shedd: “By ‘deity’ more is meant than ‘divinity,’ as this latter term is employed by different classes of antitrinitarians. The Arians [followers of Arius of Alexandria (AD 250/56-336), who taught that Jesus was not God]...taught the divinity of the Son in the sense of a *similarity of nature* between Him and the Father. This resemblance is greater and closer than that of any other being, man, or angel, but is not *identity of essence*...It is like it, but it is not it. The Son has divinity but not deity.” (Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., 258; *emphases added*)

B. B. Warfield: “‘Deity’ was introduced by the Christian Fathers for the express purpose of providing a stronger word by means of which the uniqueness of the Christians’ God should be emphasized...There exists a tendency to insist, therefore, on the ‘Deity’ of Christ, rather than His mere ‘divinity,’ in the feeling that ‘divinity’ might lend itself to the notion that Christ possessed but a secondary or reduced grade of divine quality.” (Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: 1915 Ed.*, Vol. 2, 1268-70)

⁴¹ **superangelic** – superior to angels in power, rank, nature, etc.

⁴² **multiform** – existing in many forms or kinds.

⁴³ **eternity** – “God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in His own being, and He sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 168)

⁴⁴ **ascension** – the ascent of Jesus Christ to heaven on the fortieth day after His resurrection (Mar 16:19; Luk 24:51; Act 1:9).

O Thou eternal Son of God, Thou Father of eternity, remember that we are of yesterday and are crushed before the moth. Bring us, in the fullness of Thy grace, to behold Thy glory, which Thou hadst with Thy Father before the world was.

Omnipresence⁴⁵ is another attribute of God claimed by Christ: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mat 18:20). Christ could not thus meet all the little groups of His worshippers in all parts of the world unless He was omnipresent. He claims the same perfection when He says to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20). If this promise conveys any natural and obvious sense, it is, beyond a doubt, one that implies the omnipresence and, therefore, the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Blessed Savior, Who art everywhere present, preside in all our solemn assemblies, large and small. Walk Thou in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Be Thou unto us for a little sanctuary.

Omniscience⁴⁶ is another attribute of God belonging to Christ. Peter said, “Lord, thou knowest all things” (Joh 21:17). By His omniscience, Jesus declared Judas a devil, even when he was unsuspected by any of his intimate friends. By His omniscience, He convinced Nathanael of His Messiahship and divinity. Two things are wholly inscrutable⁴⁷ except to omniscience. One is the human heart. Yet we are expressly informed that even in His humiliation, Jesus “knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (Joh 2:24-25). And when for threescore years the Son of man had been in glory, He said, “All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts” (Rev 2:23). The other thing unsearchable except to God only is the divine nature. Yet Jesus declares that He is master of that [awe-inspiring] mystery: “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father” (Joh 10:15). Surely, He Who thus knows the unsearchable God is Himself God.

Lord Jesus, search us, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in us. Lead us in the way everlasting, and reveal to us the glorious mystery of God.

Immutability⁴⁸ is another perfection belonging to God only, and inspired men ascribe it to Jesus Christ. Having shown that this earth and the heavens above with all that is grand and solid in them must pass away, the Scriptures say of Christ, “Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Psa 102:25-27; Heb 1:10-12). The inspired author of the epistle to the Hebrews declares in explicit terms, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Without profaneness, we cannot ascribe unchangeableness to any but God. Yet Paul says that Jesus is ever the same. Is He not divine?

Blessed Savior, we rejoice that Thou art the same as when Thou didst weep at the grave of Lazarus; as when Thou didst pour salvation on the dying thief; as when, in ascending to glory, Thou didst bless Thy followers. We rejoice that Thy state is changed and Thy nature immutable. Oh, pity and bless us. Be unto us a sure foundation, a munition⁴⁹ of rocks.

Beyond all doubt, omnipotence⁵⁰ is an attribute of God only. We cannot reason with one who persistently contends that almightiness is the property of man or angel. But God’s Word abundantly teaches that Jesus Christ is omnipotent. Surely, He Who in His own name raises the dead and subjects the universe to His power is almighty. Paul says Jesus does both these things: “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phi 3:20-21). Surely, such energy is omnipotent. In Revelation 1:8, Christ thus reveals Himself: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” Nor did Jesus acquire omnipotence by His ascension to glory. Indeed, almightiness cannot be acquired; [otherwise] a creature might become God. But even in His humiliation Jesus said, “What things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise...For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (Joh 5:19, 21). Jesus could do none of these things if His power could be resisted. But irresistible power is omnipotent power, is divine power, and so Christ is divine.

⁴⁵ **omnipresence** – *omni-* means “all”; coupled with “presence” means present in all places at the same time; “God’s presence in every point of space with His whole being.” (Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 3rd Ed., 313)

⁴⁶ **omniscience** – all-knowing; “God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.” (Grudem, 190)

⁴⁷ **inscrutable** – mysterious; impossible to understand.

⁴⁸ **immutability** – “The attribute of God whereby He cannot change or be changed in His essence or perfections.” (Cairns, 224)

⁴⁹ **munition** – defensive structure; fortification.

⁵⁰ **omnipotence** – almighty; “The all-powerfulness of God, His unlimited ability to act according to His own perfect will.” (Cairns, 313)

O Thou which art, which wast, and which art to come, the Almighty, cover us in the hollow of Thy hand. If our hold on Thee is feeble, let Thy hold on us be the grasp of omnipotence. Go forth conquering and to conquer until earth owns Thee Lord of all.

III. THOSE THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE BY NONE BUT GOD ARE DONE BY JESUS CHRIST, AND THEREFORE HE IS GOD. Such is the work of creation: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Joh 1:3). “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col 1:16). If by creation the Father is shown to be truly God, by creation also we establish the divinity of the Son.

Glorious Redeemer, we all were made by Thee and for Thee. We own Thy perfect and sovereign right to us and over us. All we have and are in soul or body belongs to Thee. Nor can anything dissolve the ties that bind us to Thee forever.

Jesus Christ also upholds, preserves, and governs the worlds that He has made. Isaiah says, “The government shall be upon his shoulder” (Isa 9:6). Paul says, “To the Son he [the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Heb 1:8). In one place, the same apostle says [that] He “upholdeth all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3). In another, he says, “By him all things consist” (Col 1:17). Indeed, His care and superintendence of all things is a necessity; for Paul says, “He must reign till he hath put all things under his feet” (1Co 15:25). Thus, all creatures, from the smallest insect that is seen by the microscope up to the archangel that worships and ministers before the eternal throne; all events, from the falling of a hair of the head to the wasting of nations by famine, pestilence, and war; all rule and authority, from that of a petty official to that of thrones and principalities in heaven; the material universe, from the least particle that floats in the sunbeam to the grandest system of worlds that roll in immensity—all hang dependent on His powerful providence. If one link in the chain of that dependence were broken, they would all rush headlong to destruction. He always has governed this world; and He shall ever hold the scepter over it until His last foe shall be vanquished and His last hidden one made victorious.

Lord Jesus, Who upholdest all things by the word of Thy power, bear us up, bear us on, bear us through, giving us the victory over death, hell, and all the powers of darkness.

Again, redemption is more glorious than creation or providence; and Jesus Christ is the sole author of redemption. I never heard of anyone who believed in redemption by the Lord who did not ascribe it to the Son. He alone was fit for this great work. Beveridge says “Man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy; God can satisfy, but He cannot suffer; but Christ, being both God and man, can both suffer and satisfy too, and so is perfectly fit both to suffer for man and to make satisfaction unto God. And thus Christ, having assumed my nature into His person, and so satisfied divine justice for my sins, I am received into grace and favor with the Most High God.”⁵¹

Two things the Scriptures make very clear. One is that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law—that salvation is by His blood and righteousness. The other is that for this redemption Christ is entitled to the warmest love and the highest honors, and that He actually receives both from all the redeemed. The Author of one’s eternal salvation cannot be inferior to the Author of one’s earthly existence, and so ought to be honored and adored because He is divine.

Lord Jesus, Who died [in the] past, the just for the unjust, set Thy love on us, wash us from our sins in Thy most precious blood, and make us kings and priests unto God.

Moreover, when Christ was on earth, He claimed and exercised the power of pardoning men’s iniquities. “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luke 5:20) were His brief and solemn words of superhuman authority. He Himself tells us that He thus spoke that we “might know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (Mat 9:6). In fact, Christ is exalted a Prince and a Savior to this very end that He may grant repentance and remission of sins unto Israel. Verily, He is God.

Lord Jesus, spread the skirt of Thy bloody garment over our souls, grant us repentance and remission of sins, and we shall be saved.

Nor is this all: Jesus Christ shall raise the dead. In Deuteronomy 32:39, God says, “I kill, and I make alive.” In Revelation 1:18, the Lord Christ says, “I have the keys of hell and of death.” Raising the dead is an act of almighty power, so no creature can do it. Yet Paul says, “In Christ shall all be made alive” (1Co 15:22). When on earth, more than once Jesus gave life to the dead. He spake and was obeyed like God: “Lazarus, come forth” (Joh 11:43). He said, “This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have

⁵¹ William Beveridge (1637–1708), *The Theological Works of William Beveridge*, Vol. 8, 171.

everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (Joh 6:40). Nay more, He even raised His own body from the dead: “I have power to lay it down [my life], and I have power to take it again...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Joh 10:18; 2:19). Truly, this is the Son of the Highest and may fitly count it no robbery to be equal with God.

Kind Redeemer, we cheerfully follow Thee into the grave in hope of a glorious resurrection. We would not live always. In the Last Day, raise us up and make our vile bodies like unto Thy glorious body. Give us part in the first resurrection.

In like manner shall Jesus Christ judge the quick and the dead at His coming. He expressly says that the Father hath given the Son “authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (Joh 5:27). In the same chapter, He says, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (Joh 5:22). The great tribunal before which we must all stand is “the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10). In Revelation 1:7, John says, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” If divine perfections are required for anything, it is for deciding on the destinies of men and angels; yet the unerring God has committed this judgment into the hands of Christ. He must, therefore, be God.

Lord Jesus, when Thou comest in Thy glory with all Thy holy angels and the heavens shall flee away at Thy presence, by Thy mercy, let us have boldness in the Day of Judgment.⁵²

And as Jesus made, governs, and shall judge the world, so shall He destroy these heavens and this earth. So says inspiration: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish... as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed” (Heb 1:10-12). Who but God only can do this, and do it with the ease with which man folds up a garment and lays it aside? Yet Jesus Christ shall do this very thing. Surely, He is divine.

Jesus, our Lord and our God, when Thou shalt dissolve the frame of all sublunary⁵³ things, remember and spare us according to the riches of Thy grace in glory.

IV. THE BIBLE HAS DONE MORE TO ROOT OUT IDOLATRY THAN ALL OTHER BOOKS. It declares that idolaters shall have their part in the lake of fire. Yet this same holy book authorizes the highest acts of worship to be offered to Christ. Faith in Him is as much required as faith in the Father: “Ye believe in God, believe also in me” (Joh 14:1). We are required in both Testaments to embrace Him and trust in Him on pain of perdition:⁵⁴ “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psa 2:12). “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” (Joh 3:36). The Scriptures never require of us to rely on man. On the contrary, they say, “Cursed is he that trusteth in man” (Jer 17:5). But they also say, “There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust” (Rom 15:12). Yea, more: “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Phi 2:10). And all this is by God’s command; for “when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb 1:6). Before He was born, His mother’s cousin Elisabeth by the Holy Ghost called Him “My Lord” (Luk 1:43). After His resurrection, Thomas adoringly said, “My Lord and my God” (Joh 20:28). The first Christian martyr worshipped Him, crying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Act 7:59). That Jesus receives the highest worship offered in heaven the Scriptures clearly assert: “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:11-13). No part of God’s Word speaks of a higher degree or more complete universality of solemn worship than is here said to have been offered to the Son. Verily He is divine. He is God. He has supreme divinity. There is no idolatry in heaven, yet Jesus is worshipped there.

O, Thou Lamb of God, grant us this one favor—to worship Thee with true devotion here below, and after this life to unite with the heavenly throng in ascribing to Thee blessing, honor, power, glory, and salvation.

⁵² See FGB 210, *Day of Judgment*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵³ **sublunary** – earthly.

⁵⁴ **perdition** – the fate of unbelievers; eternal death; damnation. See FGB 211, *Hell*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

The foregoing is but an outline of the argument on this glorious theme. The Bible is full of it. Sometimes we have nearly whole chapters devoted to this weighty matter...Many considerable portions of several books of the Bible are given to establish the same truth. The Gospel by John is evidently written chiefly for the same purpose. The very first verse may be taken as a text of the whole: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Joh 1:1). Time would fail us to dwell on each of the proofs of our Lord's divinity found in this Gospel.

Indeed, we may with Melville say, "There is no such book of contradictions as the Bible, if there be no person who was both human and divine. Nothing but such a combination will make sense of the Bible, or rescue it from maintaining a vast mass of inconsistencies. Some may think that it would simplify the Christian theology to remove from it the mystery that two natures coalesced in the one person of Christ; but as the divinity of our Lord is the foundation of our hope, so is it the key to the Bible. We acknowledge, reverently, a great mystery, but not the thousandth part as great as the whole Bible becomes on the supposition that Christ was only man."⁵⁵

1. If Jesus Christ is divine, He may safely be trusted with our whole case. He will betray no interest committed to Him. He invites all to come. He welcomes all who come. He is all-sufficient. He is chosen, called, and ordained of God, to this very work of saving lost men who seek a refuge in Him. A pious man once said, "If I did not know my Savior to be God, I should this night lie down in despair: the Scripture could in this case convey no comfort to my mind." But He is divine, and we may safely rest the whole weight of our salvation on His almighty arm and trust our most complicated affairs to the solution of His infinite wisdom.

2. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a most reasonable duty. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1Jo 5:12). If we fail here, we fail utterly, for there is salvation in no other (Joh 14:6; Act 4:12). He is the Rock. All hopes not built on Him must forever perish. Jesus is set for the rise and the fall of many. He will be to us a rock of salvation or a stone of stumbling, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land or a rock of offence to the unbelieving. I have long since ceased to marvel that Jehovah has laid such stress on this doctrine. In their measure, the pious do the same. They all cling to it as their last hope. Oh, that every man would ask God to give him faith—*saving* faith! For no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (1Co 12:3).

3. Will you have this Lord Jesus for your Savior? Will you bow your head and take His yoke upon you? If you confess and forsake your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all iniquity. Will you have Him? You need Him. You need Him now. You need Him urgently. You need Him to help you live. You will need Him to help you die. You will need His grace and mercy forever.

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The moving cause of the incarnation of Christ is the love of the Father and of the Son to mankind.—*John Gill*

CHRIST IS MAN

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

CONCERNING the manhood of Christ, let me say that as He is very⁵⁶ God, so He is very man: "the man Christ Jesus" (1Ti 2:5). Christ is true man, but not mere man. The word is not to be taken exclusively, as denying the divine nature. Christ is *theanthropos*, both God and man—sometimes denominated⁵⁷ from the one nature, and sometimes from the other. [He is] sometimes called God, and sometimes man. As He is truly both, having an interest in and participating of both natures, [He is] in that respect fitly said to be a mediator between God and men...

Now concerning the manhood of Christ, the prophet plainly speaks: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa 9:6). A "child"—*that* noteth His humanity. A "son"—*that* noteth His deity. A child, even man of the

⁵⁵ Henry Melville (1800-1871), sermon at St. Paul's before the Sons of the Clergy Society, May 9, 1844.

⁵⁶ very – truly.

⁵⁷ denominated – given a name or title to.

substance of His mother, born in the world (Mat 1:25). A Son, even God of the substance of His Father, begotten before the world...A child: behold His *humility*—“She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger” (Luk 2:7). A Son: behold His *dignity*—“When he bringeth in the firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb 1:6). To prove that He was man, it is enough to say that He was born, He lived, He died. God became man by a wonderful, unspeakable, and inconceivable union...Christ, as man, came of the race of kings (Mat 1:1-16); as man, He shall judge the world (Act 17:31). As man, He was wonderfully born of a virgin (Mat 1:23; Isa 7:14)...The apostle expounds the name where He saith of Christ that he was “made of a woman,” not of a man and woman both, but of a woman alone without a man (Gal 4:4).

Christ as man was foretold by the prophets and by sundry types. Christ as man was attended upon at His birth by holy angels, and a peculiar star was created for Him (Luk 2:13-14; Mat 2:1-2). Christ as man was our sacrifice and expiation;⁵⁸ He was our counterprice,⁵⁹ such as we could never have paid, but must have remained and even rotted in the prison of hell forever. Christ as man was conceived of the Holy Ghost (Mat 1:18). Christ as man is ascended into heaven (Act 1:9-10). Christ as man sits at the right hand of God (Col 3:1). Now what do all these things import, but that Jesus Christ is a very precious and most excellent person, according to His manhood? Christ had the true properties, affections, and actions of man. He was conceived, born, circumcised. He did hunger, thirst; He was clothed; He did eat, drink, sleep, hear, see, touch, speak, sigh, groan, weep, and grow in wisdom and stature, etc., as all the four evangelists⁶⁰ do abundantly testify. Because this is a point of grand importance, especially in these days wherein there are risen up so many deceivers in the midst of us, it may not be amiss to consider these following particulars:

(1) First, of these special Scriptures that speak out the certainty and verity⁶¹ of Christ’s body: “And the Word was made flesh” (Joh 1:14). “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16). Christ is one and the same, begotten of the Father *without* time—the Son of God without mother; and born of the Virgin *in time*—the Son of man without father: the natural and consubstantial⁶² Son of both.

Oh! What a great mystery is this! “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:14, 16)...O sirs! This is a main pillar of our comfort: Christ took our flesh! If He had not taken our flesh, we could never have been saved by Him. “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3). “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 9:5). This is a greater honor to all mankind than if the greatest king in the world should marry into some poor family of his subjects!

Christ saith, “For my flesh is meat indeed” (Joh 6:55); and I say His flesh was *flesh* indeed—as true, real, proper, very flesh as that which any of us carry about with us. “In the body of his flesh through death” (Col 1:22). “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5)...

God fitted His Son’s body to be joined with the deity and to be an expiatory sacrifice for sin. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). The word *himself* hath a great emphasis, and therefore that evangelical prophet Isaiah mentions it no less than five times (Isa 53:4-5, 7, 11-12). Christ had none to help or uphold Him under the heavy burden of our sins and His Father’s wrath...He Who did bear our sins in His own body on the tree, that is, the punishments that were due to our sins, did assume flesh, [which was] cast into the very mold and form of our bodies. [His body had] the same several parts, members, lineaments,⁶³ the same proportion that they have. Christ’s body was no spectrum⁶⁴ or phantasm,⁶⁵ no putative⁶⁶ body, as if it had no being but what was in appearance and from imagination—as the Marcionites,⁶⁷ Manichees,⁶⁸ and other heretics of old

⁵⁸ **expiation** – to remove or cover the guilt of sin.

⁵⁹ **counterprice** – the translation of the Greek *antilutron* from 1 Timothy 2:6, *ransom*.

⁶⁰ **four evangelists** – the authors of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

⁶¹ **verity** – truth.

⁶² **consubstantial** – of the same essence.

⁶³ **lineaments** – distinctive features.

⁶⁴ **spectrum** – ghost.

⁶⁵ **phantasm** – an illusion; a phantom.

⁶⁶ **putative** – supposed.

⁶⁷ **Marcionites** – followers of Marcion of Sinope (ca. 85-160), a second century heretic who re-jected the OT and produced his own NT, which included an abbreviated Gospel of Luke and ten epistles of Paul; believed Jesus was not born but simply appeared.

affirmed,⁶⁹ and as some men of corrupt minds do assert in our days—but as real, as solid a body as ever any was. Therefore, the apostle calls it a body of flesh (Col 1:22)—a “body” to show the organization of it and a “body of flesh” to show the reality of it in opposition to all aerial⁷⁰ and imaginary bodies. Christ’s body had all the essential properties of a true body...as all the evangelists do abundantly witness...“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luk 24:39). Christ here admits of the testimony of their own senses to assure them that it was no vision or spirit, but a true and real body risen from the dead, which they now saw...This proves Christ to be a true man, as His being from the beginning sets out His deity.

Christ had also those natural affections, passions, infirmities that are proper to a body, [such as] *hunger*: “When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered” (Mat 4:2)...Christ was not hungry all the forty days; but after, He was hungry to show He was man...And as Christ was hungry, so Christ was *thirsty*: “There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me drink” (Joh 4:7). Here you see that He that is rich and Lord of all became poor for us that He might make us rich (2Co 8:9). He that gives to all the creatures “their meat in due season” (Psa 104:27) begs water of a poor tankard-bearer to refresh Himself in His weariness and thirst. Jesus saith, “I thirst” (Joh 19:28); bleeding breeds thirsting. Sleeping: “He was asleep” (Mat 8:24), to show the truth of the human nature and the weakness of His disciples’ faith...Yea, though Christ slept in His human nature, yet was He awake in His deity that the disciples being in danger might cry unto Him more fervently and be saved more remarkably. And as Jesus slept, so He was *wearry*: “Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour” (Joh 4:6), about noon. In the heat of the day, Christ was weary...It is recorded that He was weary with His journey ere half the day was spent and that through weariness “sat thus on the well”...But, in a word, He was conceived, retained so long in the virgin’s womb, born, circumcised, lived about thirty years on earth, conversed all that time with men, suffered, died, and was crucified, buried, rose again, ascended, and sat down with His body at the right hand of God; and with it, [He] will come again to judge the world. Now what do all these things speak out, but that Christ hath a true body? Who in their wits will assert that all this could be done in, upon, and by an imaginary body? But,

(2) **Secondly, the several denominations⁷¹ that are given to Jesus Christ in Scripture do clearly evidence the verity and reality of His human nature.** He is called (1) the son of the virgin (Isa 7:14); (2) her first-born son (Luk 2:7); (3) the BRANCH (Zec 3:8; 6:12); (4) the Branch of righteousness (Jer 33:15; 23:5); (5) a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a Branch out of his roots (Isa 11:1); (6) the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15); (7) the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18); (8) the fruit of David’s loins (Psa 89:36; 132:11; Act 2:30); (9) of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3; 2Sa 7:2); (10) the lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5); (11) the seed of Jacob (Gen 28:14); (12) the seed of Isaac (Gen 26:4); (13) a son born to us, a child given to us (Isa 9:6); (14) the son of man (Mat 8:20; 17:13; Rev 1:13; Dan 7:13; Joh 3:13); (15) He is called “the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5), “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1Co 15:21): God’s justice would be satisfied in the same nature that had sinned; (16) God’s Son, made of a woman (Gal 4:4); (17) man (1Ti 2:5); (18) The son of David (Mat 1:1): “How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?” (Mar 12:35).

In that the scribes and Pharisees knew and acknowledged that Christ should be the son of David according to the Scripture—that is, should be born and descend of the stock and posterity of David according to the flesh—we may easily gather the truth of Christ’s human nature that He was ordained of God to be true man as well as God in one and the same person. [Otherwise,] He could not be the son of David. Now, even the scribes and the Pharisees knew and acknowledged that He must be the son of David, as we see here. This was a truth that they had learned out of the Scriptures; and not only they, but even the common sort of Jews in our Savior’s time. Some of the common people spake thus, “Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David?” (Joh 7:42). The Messiah was then commonly called “the son of David” (Rom 1:3). So then, Christ being of the seed of David after the flesh, He must needs be true man as well as God; for which cause He was incarnate in the due time appointed of God. That is to say, He being the Son of God from everlasting did in time become man, taking our nature upon Him, together with the infirmities of our nature, sin only excepted (Joh 1:14). Now, thus you see

⁶⁸ **Manichees** – followers of the 3rd century Iranian philosopher Mani (216-ca.277), founder of a complex form of Gnosticism who taught that Christ was a prophet, but not the incarnate Son of God.

⁶⁹ **EDITOR’S NOTE:** For concise overviews of errors concerning the Person of Christ and the Trinity, see Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 94-113; W.G.T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 394-408; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 241-248, 553-558; Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 583-622; William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Vol. 1, 267-320. In recommending these studies, CHAPEL LIBRARY does not endorse all of the theological views of these authors.

⁷⁰ **aerial** – unreal; not consisting of matter.

⁷¹ **denominations** – characteristics and titles.

that the eighteen denominations that are given to Christ in the blessed Scriptures do abundantly demonstrate the certainty of Christ's human nature. But,

(3) **Thirdly, Christ took the whole human nature.** He was truly and completely man, consisting of flesh and spirit, body and soul, yea, He assumed the entire human nature with whatever is proper to it. Christ took to Himself the whole human nature in both the essential parts of man: soul and body. The two essential and constitutive parts of man are soul and body; where these two are, there is the true man. Now Christ had both: therefore, He was true man.

[1] *First, Christ had a true human and reasonable soul.* The reasonable soul is the highest and noblest part of man. This is that which principally makes the man and hath the greatest influence into His being and essence. If, therefore, Jesus Christ had only a human body without a human soul, He had wanted⁷² that part that is most essential to man; so He could not have been looked upon as true and perfect man. O sirs! Christ redeemed and saved nothing but what He assumed. The redemption and salvation reach no further than the assumption [of human nature]...

The Scriptures do clearly evidence that Christ had a real human soul: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mat 26:38). Every word is emphatical:⁷³ "My soul"—His sorrows pierced His soul ... Look, as the soul was the first agent in transgression, so it is here the first patient in affliction. "To death"—that is, this sorrow will never be finished or intermitted⁷⁴ but by death. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful"—then Christ had a true human soul! Neither was His deity for a soul to Him, as, of old, men of corrupt minds have fancied.⁷⁵ For if He had not suffered in soul as well as in body, then our bodies only had been redeemed by Him and not our souls.

The sufferings of His body were but the body of His sufferings; the soul of His sufferings was the sufferings of His soul, which was now beset with sorrows and heavy as heart could hold: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" (Joh 12:27). The Greek word signifies a vehement commotion and perturbation;⁷⁶ as Herod's mind was troubled when he heard that a new king was born (Mat 2:3); or as the disciples were troubled when they thought they saw a spirit walking on the sea and cried out for fear (Mat 14:26); or as Zacharias was troubled at the sudden sight of the angel (Luk 1:12).

The rise and cause of Christ's soul-trouble was this: the Godhead hiding itself from [His] humanity's sense, and the Father letting out not only an apprehension of His sufferings to come, but a present taste of the horror of His wrath due to man for sin. He is amazed, overwhelmed, and perplexed with it in His humanity. No wonder, since He had the sins of all the elect to suffer for, laid upon Him by imputation!⁷⁷ So this wrath is not let out against His Person, but against their sins that were laid on Him. Now though Christ was here troubled, or jumbled and puzzled, as the word imports, yet we are not to conceive that there was any sin in this exercise of His; for He was like clean water in a clean vessel, which, being never so often stirred and shaken, still keeps clean and clear. Neither are we to think it strange that the Son of God should be put to such perplexities in this trouble as not to know what to say. Considering Him as man... that this heavy weight of wrath did light upon Him on a sudden,⁷⁸ it is no wonder that it did confound all His thoughts as man.

O sirs! Look! As sin has infected both the souls and bodies of the elect—and chiefly their souls, where it hath its chief seat—so Christ did suffer unspeakable sorrows and trouble in His soul, as well as torture in His body to expiate this sin. "For my soul is troubled," saith He. Though some sufferings of the body are very exquisite and painful, and Christ's in particular were such, yet sad trouble of mind is far more grievous than any bodily distress, as Christ also found. [He] silently bare all His outward troubles, but yet could not but cry out of His inward trouble, "Now is my soul troubled." "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isa 53:10; 1Pe 2:24). When Christ suffered for us, our sins were laid upon Him (Isa 53:5-6), as [in] the law of sacrificing of old, the sinner was to lay his hands upon the head of the beast, confessing his sins. Then the beast was slain and offered for expiation (Lev 8:14, 18, 22), thus having the man's sins, as it were, taken and put upon it: hereby the sinner was made righteous.

The sinner could never be pardoned nor the guilt of sin removed, but by Christ's making His soul an offering for sin. What did Christ in special recommend to God, when He was breathing out His last gasp, but His soul?

⁷² **wanted** – lacked.

⁷³ **emphatical** – strongly expressive; forcible.

⁷⁴ **intermitted** – interrupted.

⁷⁵ Apollinarians and Arians; see Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 158-159.

⁷⁶ **perturbation** – inner turmoil or agitation.

⁷⁷ **imputation** – putting to one's account.

⁷⁸ **on a sudden** – so suddenly.

“When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” (Luk 23:46). That is, “To Thy safe custody and blessed tuition I commend My soul, as a special treasure or jewel, most charily⁷⁹ and tenderly to be preserved and kept.” “He increased in wisdom and stature” (Luk 2:52). Here is stature for His body and wisdom for His soul. His growth in that speaks the truth of the former, and His growth in this the truth of the latter: His body properly could not grow in wisdom or His soul in stature; therefore, He must have both.

There are two *essential* parts that make up one of His natures, His manhood—soul and body. But both of these two have been denied of old. Marcion divests⁸⁰ Christ of a body, and Apollinaris⁸¹ of a soul; and the Arians⁸² held that Christ had no [human] soul, but that the deity was to Him instead of a soul and supplied the office thereof—that what the soul is to us and doth in our bodies, the divine nature was to Christ and did in His body...But,

[2] **Secondly, as Christ had a true human and reasonable soul, so Christ had a perfect, entire, complete body, and everything that is proper to a body.** For instance, (1) He had blood: “He also took part of the same” (Heb 2:14), that is, of flesh and blood. Christ had in Him the blood of a man. Shedding of blood there must be, for without it there is no remission of sin (Heb 9:22). The blood of brute creatures could not wash away the blots of reasonable creatures (Heb 10:4-5, 10); wherefore Christ took our nature that He might have our blood to shed for our sins. There is an emphasis put upon Christ as man in the great business of man’s salvation—“the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5)—the remedy carrying in it a suitability to the malady: *the sufferings of a man to expiate the sin of man*. (2) He had bones as well as flesh: “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luk 24:39). (3) Christ had in Him the [compassions] of a man (Phi 2:8), which [compassions] He fully expressed when He was on earth (Mat 12:18-20). Nay, He retaineth those [compassions] now [that] He is in heaven. In glory, He hath a fellow-feeling of His people’s miseries: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Act 9:4; Mat 25:35ff.). Though Christ in His glorified state is freed from that state of frailty, passibility,⁸³ mortality, yet He still retains His wonted pity.⁸⁴ (4) He had in Him the familiarity of a man; all the evangelists do sufficiently testify how familiarly Christ did converse⁸⁵ with all sorts of persons in this world. Man is a sociable and familiar creature; Christ became man that He might be a merciful high priest (Heb 2:17); not that His becoming man made Him more merciful, as though the mercies of a man were more than the mercies of God; but because by this means, mercy is conveyed more suitably and familiarly to man. But,

(4) **Fourthly and lastly, our Lord Jesus Christ took our infirmities upon Him.** When Christ was in this world, He submitted to the common accidents, adjuncts,⁸⁶ infirmities, miseries, calamities that are incident⁸⁷ to human nature. For the opening of this, remember there are three sorts of infirmities: (1) There are *sinful* infirmities (Jam 5:7; Psa 77:10). The best of men are but men at the best. Witness Abraham’s unbelief, David’s security, Job’s cursing, Jonah’s passion, Thomas’ unbelief, Peter’s lying, etc. Now these infirmities Jesus Christ took not upon Him; for though He was made like unto us in all things, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). (2) There are *personal* infirmities, which from some particular causes befall this or that person, [such as] leprosy, blindness, dumbness, palsy, dropsy, epilepsy, stone, gout, sickness. Christ was never sick...He had no sin, and therefore no sickness. Christ took not the passions or infirmities that were proper to this or that man. (3) There are *natural* infirmities that belong to all mankind since the fall, [such as] hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrowfulness, sweating, bleeding, wounds, death, burial. Jesus Christ took upon Himself these natural infirmities that are common to the whole nature, as all the evangelists do abundantly testify. Our dear Lord Jesus lay so many weeks and months in the Virgin’s womb. He received nourishment and growth in the ordinary way. He was brought forth and bred up just as common infants are. He had His life sustained by common food, as ours is. [He] was poor, afflicted, reproached, persecuted, tempted, deserted, falsely accused, etc. [He] lived an afflicted life and died an accursed death. His whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was made up of nothing but sorrows and sufferings. Thus, you see that Jesus Christ did put Himself under those infirmities that properly belong to the common nature of man, though He did not

⁷⁹ **charily** – carefully; cautiously.

⁸⁰ **divests** – strips; deprives.

⁸¹ **Apollinaris** (c. 310-390) – heretical bishop of Laodicea in Asia Minor; taught that the one person of Christ had a human body but not a human mind or spirit: His mind and spirit were from the divine nature of the Son of God.

⁸² **Arians** – followers of Arius (AD c. 256-336), a bishop of Alexandria, who taught that God the Father alone was eternal and that He created the Son. Arius also taught that the Son was a heavenly being who existed before the rest of creation and who was far greater than all the rest of creation; nevertheless, he was still not equal to the Father in all his attributes: he was *divine*, but not *deity*. Jehovah’s Witnesses are modern day Arians.

⁸³ **passibility** – capable of feeling or suffering.

⁸⁴ **wonted pity** – customary mercy and compassion.

⁸⁵ **converse** – keep company.

⁸⁶ **accidents, adjuncts** – occurrences, things connected to.

⁸⁷ **incident** – likely to happen.

take upon Himself the particular infirmities of individuals. Now what do all these things speak out, but the certainty and reality of Christ's manhood?

From "The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures" in *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680): Congregational minister and author of numerous works; buried in Bunhill Fields, London, England.



CHRIST IS PRECIOUS

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."—1 Peter 2:7

A felt conviction of the preciousness of the Savior has ever been regarded by enlightened ministers of the gospel as constituting a scriptural and unmistakable evidence of the existence of divine life in the soul; and in moments when neither time nor circumstance would admit of the close scrutiny of a theological creed, or a nice analysis of spiritual feelings and emotions, the one and simple inquiry upon which the whole matter is made to hinge has been—"What is your experience of the worth of the Savior? Is Christ *precious* to your heart?" The answer to this question has been to the examiner the test and the measure of the soul's spiritual and vital change. And how proper that it should be so! In proportion as the Holy Spirit imparts a real, intelligent sense of personal sinfulness, there will be the heart's appreciation of the value, sufficiency, and preciousness of the Lord Jesus...

We commence with a consideration of Christ's *personal preciousness*—His *preciousness in Himself*. It is the conviction of Christ's *personal* dignity and worth that gives to faith such a substantial realization of the greatness and preciousness of His work. We have need, beloved, to be cautioned against an error into which some have fallen—of exalting the *work* of Christ above the *person* of Christ—in other words, not tracing the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to the essential dignity of Christ's person.

[If] the *Godhead* of the Savior is admitted, His atoning death becomes a fact of easy belief. Once concede that He Who died upon the cross was "God *manifest in the flesh*," and the mind will experience no difficulty in admitting that that death was sacrificial and expiatory. The sufferings and death of a Being so illustrious must be in harmony with an object and in connection with a result of equal dignity and momentousness; and where will there be found such an object and such a result as the salvation of man?...There had been no glory in His achievements, no significance in His work, no efficacy in His blood, had there been no divine dignity and worth in His *person*. And, had He not taken a single step in working out the salvation of man—had He repaired no breach, wept no tear, endured no agony, shed no blood in the redemption of His Church—had He, in a word, conferred not a solitary blessing upon our race—He still had been the eternal Son of God—divine, peerless, glorious—the object of supreme love, adoration, and worship by all celestial beings and through all eternal ages. While, then, His sacrificial work illustrates His marvelous grace and love to sinners, that work owes all its acceptance and efficacy to the value imparted to it by the essential deity of His person. Thus, it is the *personal* preciousness of Christ that imparts an official preciousness to His work.

Who, then, is the Lord Jesus Christ? In common parlance,⁸⁸ men term Him, "our Savior." But do the great body pause and reflect *who* Christ really is? Do they regard Him as the Creator of this world—of all worlds? of their being—of all beings? Do they consider that "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (Joh 1:3)? If so, would they not give Him divine homage, since that which creates must be antecedent to and above the thing created, and therefore must be pre-existent and divine?

⁸⁸ parlance – speech.

What a grand and glorious truth is this to the believing soul—the absolute deity of the Savior—the essential Godhead of Christ! How it endears Him to the heart as the Rock of Ages upon which its hope is built! How precious must be every evidence of the divine strength, stability, and durability of that basis upon which the believing sinner reposes his whole salvation. Precious, then, is Christ *as God*. Precious in His deity—precious as a distinct person in the adorable Godhead—precious as God over all, blessed for evermore (Rom 9:5). But pause, Christian reader, for a moment, in wonder and praise before this august⁸⁹ truth. If there is a spot where we should put off the shoes from our feet, surely it is this. With what profound reverence, with what silent awe, yet with what adoring love should we contemplate the Godhead of our Redeemer! But for that Godhead, we had been forever lost! His obedience to the Law, His satisfaction to the justice of Jehovah, had been of no efficacy or avail, save only as it partook of the authority, dignity, and virtue of His higher nature. Do not question the existence of the fact because of the mystery of its mode. *How* Jehovah could become incarnate is a wonder we shall never, in this state of limited knowledge, fully understand; enough that it is so.

Let reason reverently adore, and faith implicitly trust...Hesitate not, then, to give full credence to all the glorious truths of the gospel, and to place the entire weight of your soul upon the atonement of Jesus, and to believe that, sinner though you are, be it the very chief, such is the divine worth and sovereign efficacy of His sacrifice, you will, you must, you shall be saved to the uttermost because your Creator is your Savior, and your Judge is your Justifier.

But this personal representation of the Lord Jesus involves also the preciousness of His *manhood*. His personal alliance with our nature, His condescending stoop to our humanity, is not the least endearing feature to the heart of His believing saints. We have claimed for the Son of God absolute deity; we now claim for Him perfect humanity. Flesh, real and substantial, yet, “harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26) was He “made.” A humanity identical with His people in all but its original and actual sinfulness. “Who knew no sin” (2Co 5:21). Yet, what a sin-bearer was He! All the transgressions of His elect met upon Him! But He could only bear sin as He Himself was essentially free from its taint. Had there been the remotest breath of pollution adhering to Him—had one drop of the moral virus circulated through His veins, it had rendered Him utterly and forever incapable of presenting to the justice of God an atonement for sin. He then had needed, like the high priest of old, to have offered first “for his own sins, and then for the people’s” (Heb 7:27). How precious, then, beloved, is our Lord Jesus as “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.” Think of His perfect humanity—a humanity free from sin, and therefore capable of dying for the ungodly—a humanity laden with sorrow, and therefore capable of sympathizing with the afflicted. Precious to our hearts as God—precious as Man—precious as both united in one—inconceivably and eternally precious is He, Whose name is “Wonderful” (Isa 9:6) to His believing saints. Tell, oh tell how precious is that humanity of the Son of God that partook by actual participation and still bears by the most perfect sympathy all the sinless weaknesses, infirmities, temptations, and sorrows of His people. Precious humanity! to which, when other human friendships are changed, other human love is chilled, and other human sympathy is exhausted, you may repair and find it an evergreen, a perennial stream, a gushing fountain of unchanged affection, tenderness, and sympathy, meeting and satisfying to their utmost capacity your hearts’ deep pantings. Precious humanity! that dries each tear, that bears each burden, that is touched with each infirmity, that soothes each sorrow, and that succors each temptation of His people. “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:17-18).

Oh, love the Lord, then, all ye His saints; laud Him, all ye His people! In all your deep grief, your lonely sorrows, your sore trials, your fiery temptations, your pressing wants, your daily infirmities, repair to the succourings, and the sympathies, and the intercessions of His humanity, and learn how precious Jesus can be to the hearts of His suffering and sorrowing ones. Upon this rock of Christ’s complex person, God has built His Church; and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

Precious is the Lord Jesus in His work...Look at the groundwork of our salvation. “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation”(Isa 28:16). Upon such a foundation, we look for a superstructure in all respects worthy of its costliness and capability. We find it in the work of Jesus. Oh, what a superstructure is it—nothing less than the salvation of His Church! Such a work was worthy of God, and of all the glory, wisdom, and power embarked in its accomplishment. Nowhere have we such a perfect view of the divine glory as through the medium of the cross. That magnificent sky that spreads

⁸⁹ august – impressing the emotions or imagination as magnificent.

above us, studded and glowing with countless myriads⁹⁰ of worlds, pales before the subdued glory, the softened splendor of the cross of Christ.

Nowhere does Jehovah-Jesus appear to the spiritual, believing mind so exalted as when He stoops, so glorious as when in eclipse, so holy as when bearing sin, so loving as when enduring its punishment, so triumphant as when vanquished upon the cross! Oh, study not God in the jeweled heavens, in the sublimity of the mountain, in the beauty of the vale, in the grandeur of the ocean, in the murmurs of the stream, in the music of the winds. God made all this, but all this is not God. Study Him *in the cross of Jesus!* Look at Him through this wondrous telescope, and although, as through a glass darkly, you behold His glory—the Godhead in awful eclipse, the Sun of His deity setting in blood—yet that rude and crimsoned cross more fully reveals the mind of God, more harmoniously discloses the perfections of God, more perfectly unveils the heart of God, and more fully exhibits the glory of God, than the combined power of ten thousand worlds like this, even though sin had never marred, and the curse had never blighted it. Study God in Christ, and Christ on the cross. Oh, the marvels that meet in it—the glory that gathers round it—the streams of blessing that flow from it—the deep, refreshing shadow it casts in the happy experience of all who look to Jesus and live—who look to Jesus and love—who look to Jesus and obey—who look to Jesus and embrace that blessed “hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2).

A worthy structure this of a foundation so divine! What could be more worthy of God, Whose essence is “love,” than the salvation of His people? In nothing could He appear more like Himself. Upon no platform could He so honorably and completely withdraw the veil from His perfections, and stand forth in His full-orbed majesty, “mighty to save” (Isa 63:1) as this. Humble believer in Christ, you are *saved!* Happy saint of God, you shall be in *heaven!* Christ has paid your debt, opened your prison, broken your chains, and set you free from the Law’s curse, from sin’s condemnation, and from death’s penalty, and you will be forever with the Lord! Is not this enough to make your whole life, clouded and checkered⁹¹ though it is, a sweet psalm of praise—thus learning the first notes of the song that will employ your tongue through eternity?

How precious is the righteousness of Christ—a righteousness that fully justifies our *person*, completely covering all our deformity, and presenting us to God...And look at the preciousness of His *sacrifice*, which is as a “sweet-smelling savour” unto God (Eph 5:2), ascending ever from off the golden altar before the throne in one continuous cloud of incense, wreathing the persons, perfuming the prayers, accompanying the offerings, and presenting with acceptance every breath of devotion, every accent of praise, and every token of love that His people here below lay at His feet. “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:14). That “one offering,” offered once for all, was so divine, so holy, so complete, so satisfactory, it has forever perfected the pardon, perfected the justification, perfected the adoption, and will perfect the sanctification when it perfects the glory of all the elect of Jehovah. Beloved, is not this enough to check every sigh, to quell every fear, to annihilate every doubt, and to fill you with peace and joy in believing? What shouts of praise to Jesus should burst from every lip as each believer contemplates the sacrifice that has secured his eternal salvation...Believer, evince⁹² your sense of the preciousness of this great sacrifice by bringing to it daily sins, by drawing from it hourly comfort, and by laying yourself upon it, body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice unto God.

How precious is Christ in all the offices and relations that He sustains to His people. Precious as the Head, the covenant-surety Head, of His people, the source of life, the seat of power, the fountain of all blessing. Reader, *hold fast the Headship of Christ!* Acknowledge no legislative head, no administrative head, no authoritative head, no reigning head of the Church, but the LORD JESUS CHRIST. There are undercurrents of priestly domination in the Church of God in the present day, subversive of this cardinal truth, against which it behoves us to be on our guard. Acknowledge no spiritual Head and King in Zion but the Lord Jesus! Evince your recognition of, reverence for, and love to His government by vindicating His Headship, bowing to His authority, and obeying His laws. Oh, how blessed to be under the holy, benign, and gentle government of Christ, Whose scepter is a scepter of righteousness, so mild and loving in its sway that “a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench” (Mat 12:20)...

BUT TO WHOM IS CHRIST PRECIOUS? This is a most important question. He is not so to all. It is a privileged class, a peculiar people, a little flock, few and scattered, hidden and unknown, who feel the Savior’s preciousness. Only to the *believer* is Christ precious; the declaration of the Holy Ghost is, “Unto you therefore which BELIEVE He is precious.” This is philosophically as well as scripturally true. There cannot possibly be a felt conviction of the worth of an object of which we have no intelligent and clear perception. There must be something to create interest, to awaken admiration, to inspire love; the object must be seen, known, and tried.

⁹⁰ **myriads** – large indefinite numbers.

⁹¹ **checkered** – uneven or inconsistent and characterized by periods of trouble.

⁹² **evince** – show.

Now, the only spiritual faculty that discerns Christ, and in discerning Christ realizes His preciousness, is—*faith*. Faith is...the spiritual eye of the soul. Faith sees Christ; and as Christ is seen, His excellence is descried.⁹³ As His excellence unfolds, so He becomes an object of endearment to the heart. Oh, how lovely and how glorious is Jesus to the clear, far-seeing eye of faith! Faith beholds Him the matchless, peerless One—His beauty eclipsing, His glory outshining all other beings. Faith sees majesty in His meanness,⁹⁴ dignity in His condescension, honor in His humiliation, beauty in His tears, transcendent, surpassing glory in His cross...Beloved, in proportion as the personal dignity, beauty, and excellence of the Lord Jesus unfolds to the believing eye, He becomes more sensibly and deeply enshrined in the heart's warmest love. We must know the Lord Jesus to admire Him, must admire Him to love Him, and must love Him to serve Him.

The believer, too, beholds a *suitability* in Christ, sees Him to be just the Savior adapted to the necessities of his soul; and this renders Him peculiarly precious. "I see Him," exclaims the believer, "to be exactly the Christ I need: His fullness meets my emptiness, His blood cleanses my guilt, His grace subdues my sin, His patience bears with my infirmities, His gentleness succors my weakness, His love quickens my obedience, His sympathy soothes my sorrows, His beauty charms my eye. He is just the Savior, just the Christ I need, and no words can describe His preciousness to my soul"...The believer can say, "Christ is *mine*, and I have all things in one, even in Christ, Who is my all and in all." This simple, trembling faith, sublime in its simplicity, mighty in its tremblings, sweeps all the treasures of the everlasting covenant of grace and all the fullness of the Surety of the covenant into its lap, and exclaims, "All is mine because Christ is mine, and I am Christ's"...If you have fled to Jesus as a poor, empty, believing sinner, there is not a throb of love in His loving heart, nor a drop of blood in His flowing veins, nor a particle of grace in His mediatorial fullness, nor a thought of peace in His divine mind that is not yours, all yours, inalienably yours, as much yours as if you were its sole possessor. And in proportion as you thus deal with Christ, individually travelling to Him, living upon Him, living out of Him, dealing as personally with Him as He deals personally with you, He will insinuate⁹⁵ Himself in your regard, and will become growingly precious to your soul..

There are peculiar *circumstances* in the believer's experience when Christ becomes especially precious to the soul. For example: in the deeper ploughings of the heart's hidden sinfulness—when the Holy Ghost reveals more of the innate corruption of our nature, and gives a more spiritual perception of sin's exceeding sinfulness, oh, how precious does the finished work of Christ then become!—how precious the blood that cleanseth from all sin! If God is leading you through this stage of Christian experience, beloved, be not alarmed. It is but to build up His dear Son upon the wreck and ruin of your own merit, strength, and sufficiency. He will have us love His Son with a love like His own—a love of divine, supreme, ineffable affection—and this can only be felt in the region of our own nothingness.

In circumstances of *spiritual relapse*, how precious does Christ become as the Restorer of His saints, as the Shepherd that goeth in quest of His stray sheep and bringeth it back to the fold with rejoicing. How unspeakably dear is the Savior to the wandering yet restored heart! Our backslidings are perpetual and aggravated, our affections fickle and truant,⁹⁶ our faith fluctuating, our love waning, our zeal flagging, our walk often feeble and unsteady; but Jesus withdraws not His eye from His own work in the soul, and never for a moment loses sight of His stray-going sheep...

How precious is Christ in the season of fiery temptation! When the arch-foe comes, robed as an angel of light, with gentle tread, and oily tongue, and soft persuasiveness, seeking to ensnare and beguile the unsuspecting and unwary—leveling his darts at the very foundations of our faith—insinuating his doubts of the truth of the Bible, of the being of God, of the sufficiency of the Savior, of the reality of a future world—thus seeking to shake the confidence, obscure the hope, and destroy the comfort of the Lord's people—oh, how precious then is Christ as the Conqueror and Spoiler of Satan; as He Who enables the trembling believer to quench the fiery dart in His own blood, and to take refuge beneath His outspread, all-sheltering wing!...He Who, alone and unaided, battled with Satan those forty days and nights in the solitary wilderness—is He Who was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb 4:15) and "knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2Pe 2:9) and will shortly bruise Satan, crushed and conquered, under your feet (Rom 16:20).

In the hour of adversity, of trial, of sorrow, oh, how precious is Christ in the experience of the believer! It would seem, beloved, as though we had never really known Him until then. Certainly, we never knew from experience that there was so much that was human, tender, and compassionate in His heart until sorrow touched our own. We had no conception what a fount of sympathy was there. A new bend in your path, a new epoch in your history, or a new stage in your journey, has frosted with the snowflake and swept with the storm-blast of winter the entire

⁹³ **descried** – made known; revealed.

⁹⁴ **meanness** – humbleness of birth; lowliness.

⁹⁵ **insinuate** – introduce gradually.

⁹⁶ **fickle and truant** – changeable and straying.

landscape of life: fortune gone—friends removed—health failing—poverty threatening—want pressing, oh, how dreary and lonely seems the path you tread. But pause—it is not all winter! Jesus approaches! He unveils a bosom once pierced, shows a heart once sad, and drawing you within its blest pavilion, hides you from the wind and covers you from the tempest. You never thought Jesus had a heart of such exquisite tenderness until now...The creature has left a blank, but Christ has come and filled it. Reverse has made you poor, but the treasures of divine love have enriched you. In the Lord Jesus, you have more than found the loved one you have lost; and if in the world you have encountered tribulation, in Him you have found peace. O sweet sorrow! O sacred grief that en-thrones and enshrines my Savior more preeminently and deeply in my soul!

There is a *supremacy* in the feeling of Christ's preciousness to the believer, which is worthy of a remark. Christ has the *preeminence* in the affection of the regenerate. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa 73:25). Listen to His own words, asserting His claim to a single and supreme affection: "He that loveth father or mother"—*brother or sister, wife, or children*—"more than me is not worthy of me" (Mat 10:37). There are natural ties of affection—the parental, the conjugal, the filial; there are ties, too, of human love and friendship, linking heart to heart; but not one word does He Who inspired those affections, Who formed those ties, breathe, denying their existence or forbidding their exercise. Nay, the religion He came to inculcate distinctly recognizes these human relations, and seeks to strengthen and intensify by purifying, elevating, and immortalizing them. But mark the emphatic word employed by Christ: "*more than me*"!...In a word, Christ should become more supreme and precious to our hearts by all the sweet, sacred relations and affections of life...

Receive as precious everything that flows from the government of Jesus. A precious Christ can give you nothing but what is precious. Welcome the rebuke—it may be humiliating; welcome the trial—it may be painful; welcome the lesson—it may be difficult; welcome the cup—it may be bitter; welcome everything that comes from Christ in your individual history. Everything is costly, salutary, and precious that Jesus sends...The most severe disciplinary dispensations in the government of Christ are as much the fruit of His eternal, redeeming love as was the tenderest and most touching expression of that love uttered from the cross. All is precious, wise, and salutary in the dealings of Christ. His teachings, His woundings, His withholdings, His withdrawals, His slayings, His changed countenance, His altered tones—when, in a word, His uplifted hand lights heavily upon us, smiting us seven times, even then, oh, how precious should Christ be to the believing soul! Then it is we learn by experience what a balsam exudes from His pierced heart for the very wound His own hand inflicted!...Oh, precious Christ! so divine, so all-sufficient, so indescribably precious, may we not welcome with thankfulness and receive with submission all that Thou dost send...

But there is approaching a period—ah, how it speeds!—which will be the most solemn and severe, yet the sweetest and truest test of the sustaining, soothing power of Christ's preciousness in the experience of His saints: *the last sickness and the closing scene of life*. Imagine that moment to have arrived. All of earth's attraction ceases, all of creature-succor fails. Everything is failing: heart and strength failing—mental power failing—medical skill failing—human affection and sympathy failing; the film of death is on the eye, and the invisible realities of the spirit-world are unveiling to the mental view. Bending over you, the loved one who has accompanied you to the margin of the cold river asks a sign. You are too weak to conceive a thought, too low to breathe a word, too absorbed to bestow a responsive glance. You cannot now [affirm] your faith in an elaborate creed, and you have no profound experience, ecstatic emotions, or heavenly visions to describe. *One* brief, but all-emphatic, all-expressive sentence embodies the amount of all that you now know, believe, and feel; it is the profession of your faith, the sum of your experience, the ground of your hope: "CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO MY SOUL." Enough! The dying Christian can give, and the inquiring friend can wish no more. Dearest Savior, be Thou close to me in that solemn moment! Tread the valley by my side, pillow my languid head upon Thy bosom, speak these words of heart-cheer to my struggling, panting, departing soul: "Fear not: for I am with thee" (Isa 43:5). Then, it will be happiness for me to die—death will have no venom—the grave no gloom—eternity no dread; and, from the measured experience of Thy preciousness on earth, I shall pass in triumph through the shadowy portal into the full sunshine and perfect realization and eternal enjoyment of all that faith believed, love desired, and hope expected of Thy full-orbed glory and preciousness in heaven.

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