

# Power and Efficacy Communicated Unto the Office of Christ

by John Owen

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*The power and efficacy of the office of Christ depend on his holy, mysterious person, from which all power and efficacy are derived.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 2:16

**Topics:** "The Offices of Christ", "Faith in Christ's Divine Nature"

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## Description

John Owen emphasizes the significance of Christ's offices as king, priest, and prophet in the redemption and salvation of the church. He explains that the efficacy of these offices stems from the divine nature of Christ, which enables Him to fulfill roles that no mere human could. Owen argues that true benefits from Christ's offices require faith in His divine person, as it is through this faith that believers access the grace and truth necessary for salvation. He highlights that the Old Testament figures, while significant, could not achieve the eternal salvation that Christ accomplishes through His unique divine-human nature. Ultimately, Owen asserts that understanding and believing in the person of Christ is essential for receiving the full benefits of His mediatorial work.

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## Transcript

It is by the exercise and discharge of the office of Christ -- as the king, priest, and prophet of the church -- that we are redeemed, sanctified, and saved. Thereby doth he immediately communicate all Gospel benefits unto us -- give us an access unto God here by grace, and in glory hereafter; for he saves us, as he is the mediator between God and man. But hereon an inquiry may be made -- whence it is that the acts and duties of this office of Christ, in their exercise and discharge, should have such a power and efficacy, with respect unto their supernatural and eternal ends; for the things which depend upon them, which are effected by them, are all the principal means of the glory of God, and the only concernments of the souls of men. And this, I say, is his holy, mysterious person; from thence alone all power and efficacy is derived, and transfused into his offices, and into all that is due in the discharge of them.

A truth this is, of that importance, that the declaration and demonstration of it is the principal design of one entire book of the holy Scriptures, viz., of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle unto the Hebrews. That the glorious excellency of the person of Christ doth enable him, in the discharge of his offices, to accomplish those ends, -- which none other, though vested with the same offices, could, in the exercise of them, attain



(1.) Those acts of his offices, whereon the sanctification and salvation of the church do principally depend, could not be performed but in and by that nature. Therein alone could he yield obedience unto the law, that it might be fulfilled in us -- without which we could not stand in judgment before God. See Rom. viii. 3; x. 3, 4. Therein alone could he undergo the curse of the law, or be made a curse for us, that the blessing might come upon us: Gal. iii. 13, 14. It was necessary that, as a priest, he should have something of his own to offer unto God, to make atonement for sin: Heb. viii. 3. The like may be said of his whole ministry on the earth -- of all the effects of his incarnation.

(2.) Herein that cognation and alliance between him and the church, which were necessary to entitle it unto a participation of the benefits of his mediation, do depend. For hereby he became our göel -- the next of kin -- unto whom belonged the right of redemptions and from whom alone we could claim relief and succour in our lost condition. This is divinely and at large declared by the apostle, Heb. ii. 10-18. Having at large explained this context in our exposition of that chapter, and therein declared both the necessity and benefit of the cognation between the church and its High Priest, I shall not here farther insist upon it. See to the same purpose, Eph. v. 25-27. Wherefore, had he not been partaker of our nature, we could have received no benefit -- not that without which we must eternally perish -- by any office that he could have undertaken. This, therefore, was necessary unto the constitution of his person, with respect unto his offices. But --

II. There was yet more required thereunto, or to render his offices effectual unto their proper ends. Not one of them could have been so, had he been no more than a man -- had he had no nature but ours. This I shall particularly demonstrate, considering them in their usual distribution -- unto the glory of his divine person, and our own edification in believing.

(1.) He could not have been the great and singular prophet of the church, had he been a man only, though ever so excellent and glorious; and that for these three reasons:--

[1.] He was to be the prophet of the whole catholic church; that is, of all the elect of God, of all that shall be saved in all ages and places, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. He had a personal ministry for the instruction of the church, whilst he was on the earth; but his prophetic office was not confined thereunto. <sup>88</sup>For that was limited unto one nation, Matt. xv. 24; Rom. xv. 8, and was for a short season only. But the church was never without a prophet -- that is, one on whom it was incumbent to reveal unto it, and instruct it in, the will of God -- nor can be so unto the consummation of all things. This is Christ alone. For --

1st, I take it for granted that, from the beginning, from the giving of the first promise, the Son of God did, in an especial manner, undertake the care of the church -- as unto all the ends of the wisdom, will, and grace of God; and I take it for granted here, because I have proved it at large elsewhere. It evidently followeth on the eternal compact between the Father and him unto this end. In the work which belonged hereunto -- that which concerned its instruction in the will of God, its saving illumination and spiritual wisdom, is of such importance, as that, without it, none can be partaker of any other blessings whatever. In this instruction and illumination consists the discharge of the prophetic office of Christ.

2dly, Upon the account of his susception of his office even before his incarnation, considered as God; he is said to act in it so as to be sent of God unto his work, Micah v. 2, "The Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." His goings forth are not his eternal generation, which consists in one individual eternal act of the Father; but it is the egress, the exercise of his power and care

for the church, that is so expressed. These were from the beginning the first foundation of the church, in answer unto his everlasting counsels, Zech ii. 8, 9, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you;" and "I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me." He who is sent calleth himself "The Lord of hosts," and affirms that he will destroy the nations by the shaking of his hand; who can be no other but God himself. That is, it was the Son of God, who was to be incarnate, as is declared in the next words: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee," verses 10, 11. He promiseth that he will dwell in the midst of the people; which was accomplished when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," John i. 14; which was the time of the calling of the Gentiles, when many nations were to be joined unto the Lord; and those that were so called were to be his people: "They shall be my people." And yet in all this he was sent by the Lord of hosts: "Thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee." Wherefore, with respect unto his susception of his offices towards the church, the Lord of hosts in the person of the Son is said to be sent by the Lord of hosts; that is, in the person of the Father. So was he the prophet of the church even before his incarnation, sent or designed by the Father to instruct it -- to communicate spiritual and saving light unto it. So he testified concerning himself unto the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58. Which, as it invincibly proves his eternal pre-existence unto his incarnation, so it is not only intended. He was so before Abraham, as that the care of the church was then and always from the beginning on him. And he discharged this office four ways:--

(1st,) By personal appearances in the likeness of human nature, in the shape of a man, as an indication of his future incarnation; and under those appearances instructing the church. So he appeared unto Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua, as I have proved elsewhere. And those peculiar appearances of the person of the Son for the instruction of believers, are a full demonstration that the care and work of it were committed unto him in a peculiar manner. And I am not without thoughts, although I see some difficulty in it, that the whole Old Testament, wherein God perpetually treats with men by an assumption of human affections unto himself, so to draw us with the cords of a man, proceeded from the person of the Son, in a preparation for, and prospect of, his future incarnation.

(2dly,) By the ministry of angels upon his undertaking to be the mediator for the church with God, the angels were in a peculiar manner put into dependence on him, even as he became a new and immediate head unto the whole creation. This belonged unto that especial glory which he had with the Father "before the world was," whereof we have treated before. All things were to be anew gathered into a head in him, "both which are in heaven, and which are on earth," Eph. i. 10. And he became "the firstborn of every creature," Col. i. 15, the Lord and proprietor of them. Hence the whole ministry of angels was subordinate unto him; and whatever instruction was thereby given unto the church in the mind and will of God, it was immediately from him, as the great prophet of the church.

(3dly,) By sending his Holy Spirit to inspire, act, and guide the prophets, by whom God would reveal himself. God spoke unto them by the "mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began," Luke i. 70. But it was the Spirit of Christ that was in them that spoke by them, that revealed the things which concerned the redemption and salvation of the church, 1 Peter i. 11, 12. And by this Spirit he himself preached unto those that were disobedient in the days of Noah, who are now in prison for their disobedience, 901 Peter iii. 19, 20. For he was so the prophet of the church always as to tender manifold instructions unto the perishing, unbelieving world. Hence is he said to lighten "every man that cometh into

the world," John i. 9, by one way or other communicating to them some notices of God and his will; for his light shineth in, or irradiates darkness itself -- that darkness which is come on the minds of men by sin -- though the "darkness comprehend it not," verse 5.

(4thly,) By the ministry of holy men, acted and moved by his Spirit. So he gave forth the word that was written for an everlasting rule of faith and obedience unto the church.

Thus were the office and work of instructing and illuminating of the church on his hand alone from the beginning, and thus were they by him discharged. This was not a work for him who was no more but a man. His human nature had no existence until the fulness of time, the latter days, and therefore could effect or operate nothing before. And whereas the apostle distinguisheth between the speaking of God in the Son and his speaking in the prophets, opposing the one to the other, (Heb. i. 1, 2,) he doth it with respect unto his personal ministry unto the Church of the Jews, and not with respect unto his being the peculiar fountain of life and light unto the whole church in all ages.

It is true, we have under the Gospel many unspeakable advantages from the prophetic office of Christ, above what they enjoyed under the Old Testament; but he was the prophet of the church equally in all ages. Only he hath given out the knowledge of the mind of God in different degrees and measures; that which was most perfect being for many reasons reserved unto the times of the Gospel; the sum whereof is, that God designed him unto a pre-eminence above all in his own personal ministry.

If any shall now inquire how the Lord Christ could be the prophet of the church before he took our nature on him and dwelt among us; I shall also ask how they suppose him to be the prophet of the church now he hath left the world and is gone to heaven, so as that we neither see him nor hear him anymore? If they shall say that he is so by his Spirit, his Word, and the ministry which he hath ordained; I say, so was he the prophet of the church before his incarnation also. To confine the offices of Christ, as unto their virtue, power and efficacy, unto the times of the Gospel only, is utterly to evacuate the first promise, with the covenant of grace founded thereon. And their minds are secretly influenced by a disbelief of his divine person, who suppose that the respect of the church unto Christ, in faith, love, trust, and instruction, commenceth from the date of his incarnation.

91[2.] The full comprehension of the mind and will of God, of the whole divine counsel concerning his glory in the sanctification and salvation of the church, could not at once reside in the mind of any mere creature. Yet was this necessary unto him who was to be the prophet of the church; that is, the fountain of truth, life, and knowledge unto it. Hence is his name "Wonderful, Counsellor," as he who was participant of all the eternal counsels of God; whereon in him as incarnate all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge were hid, Col. ii. 3. In him this could be alone, in whom was life, and "the life was the light of men," John i. 4. God did reveal his mind and will by angels and men. But as he did it at sundry times, so he did it by several parts, or various parcels -- not only as the church was fit to receive it, but as they were able to communicate it. The whole of the divine counsels could not be comprehended, and so not declared, by any of them. Hence the angels themselves -- notwithstanding their residence in the presence of God, beholding his face, and all the glorious messages wherein they were employed -- learned more of his mind after the personal ministry of Christ, and the revelation of the mysteries of his counsel therein, than ever they knew before, Eph. iii. 8, 9, 11; 1 Peter i. 12. And on the account of their imperfection in the comprehension of his counsels, it is said that "he charged his angels with folly," Job iv. 18. And the best of the prophets not only received divine truth by parcel, but comprehended not the depths of the revelations made unto them, 1 Peter i. 11, 12.

To this purpose is that divine testimony, John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." It is of all the prophets concerning whom it is affirmed, that no man hath seen God at any time. So is it evident in the antithesis between Moses the principal of them, and the Lord Christ, in the verse foregoing: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Wherefore no man, no other man or prophet whatever hath seen God at any time; that is, had a perfect comprehension of his counsels, his mind and will, as they were to be declared unto the church. This is the privilege of the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father; not only as being his eternal delight and love, but also as one acquainted with all his secret counsels -- as his fellow and participant of all his bosom thoughts.

He says that "all that ever came before him were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them," John x. 8. This some of old impiously applied unto the prophets of the Old Testament; whereas he intended it only of those false prophets who pretended of themselves that they, any of them, were the Messiah, the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom his elect sheep would not attend unto. But it is true that all who went before him, neither separately nor jointly, had the knowledge of God, so as to declare him fully unto the church.

It is the most fond and wicked imagination of the Socinians, invented to countenance their disbelief and hatred of his divine person, that during the time of his flesh he was taken up into heaven, and there taught the doctrine of the Gospel, as Mohammed feigned concerning himself and his Alkoran. The reason and foundation of his perfect knowledge of God was, his being the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, and not a fictitious rapture of his human nature.

To this purpose have we his own testimony, John iii. 13, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." The matter whereof he treats is the revelation of heavenly things. For, finding Nicodemus slow in the understanding of the doctrine and necessity of regeneration, which yet was plain and evident in comparison of some other heavenly mysteries, he asks of him, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not," (things wrought in the earth and in your own breasts,) "how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" if I declare unto you the deep counsels of the will of God above, verse 12. But hereon a question might arise, how he should himself come to the knowledge of these heavenly things whereof they had never heard before, and which no other man could tell them of, especially considering what he had said before, verse 11, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Hereof he gives an account in these words. Wherefore the ascending into heaven, which he denies unto all men whatever -- "No man hath ascended up to heaven" -- is an entrance into all the divine, heavenly counsels of God; no man either hath or ever had a full comprehension of these heavenly things but he himself alone. And unto him it is ascribed on a double account: first, That he came down from heaven; secondly, That when he did so, he yet still continued in heaven: which two properties give us such a description of the person of Christ as declare him a full possessor of all the counsels of God. He descended from heaven in his incarnation, whereby he became the Son of man; and he is and was then in heaven in the essence and glory of his divine nature. This is the full of what we assert. In the knowledge and revelation of heavenly mysteries, unto the calling, sanctification, and salvation of the church, doth the prophetic office of Christ consist. This he positively affirms could not otherwise be, but that he who came down from heaven was also at the same instant in heaven. This is that glorious person whereof we speak. He who, being always in heaven in the glory and essence of his divine nature, came down from heaven, not locally, by a mutation of his residence, but by dispensation in the assumption of our nature into personal union with himself -- he alone is meet and

able to be the prophet of the church in the revelation of the heavenly mysteries of the counsels of the will of God. In him alone were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3, because in him alone "dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily," verse 9.

I do not hereby ascribe the infusion of omniscience, of infinite understanding, wisdom, and knowledge, into the human nature of Christ. It was and is a creature, finite and limited, nor is a capable subject of properties absolutely infinite and immense. Filled it was with light and wisdom to the utmost capacity of a creature; but it was so, not by being changed into a divine nature or essence, but by the communication of the Spirit unto it without measure. The Spirit of the Lord did rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa. xi. 2, 3.

[3.] The Spirit of God dwelling in him, in all the fullness of his graces and gifts, gave him an understanding peculiar unto himself; as above that of all creatures, so beneath the essential omniscience of the divine nature. Hence some things, as he was a man, he knew not, (Mark xiii. 32,) but as they were given him by revelation, Rev. i. 1. But he is the prophet of the church in his whole entire person, and revealed the counsel of God, as he was in heaven in the bosom of the Father. Cursed be he that trusteth in man, that maketh flesh his arm, as to the revelations of the counsels of God. Here lies the safety, the security, the glory of the church. How deplorable is the darkness of mankind, in their ignorance of God and heavenly things! In what ways of vanity and misery have the generality of them wandered ever since our first apostasy from God! Nothing but hell is more full of horror and confusion than the minds and ways of men destitute of heavenly light. How miserably did those among them who boasted themselves to be wise, wax foolish in their imaginations! How woefully did all their inquiries after the nature and will of God, their own state, duty, and happiness, issue in curiosity, uncertainty, vanity, and falsehood! He who is infinitely good and compassionate, did from the beginning give some relief in this woeful state, by such parcels of divine revelations as he thought meet to communicate unto them by the prophets of old -- such as they were able to receive. By them he set up a light shining in a dark place, as the light of stars in the night. But it was the rising of the 94Sun of Righteousness alone that dispelled the darkness that was on the earth, the thick darkness that was on the people, bringing life and immortality to light by the Gospel. The divine person of the Son of God, in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath now made known all things unto the church, giving us the perfect idea and certainty of all sacred truth, and the full assurance of things invisible and eternal.

Three things are necessary, that we may have the benefit and comfort of divine light or truth -- 1st, The fulness of its revelation; 2dly, The infallibility of it; and, 3dly, The authority from whence it doth proceed. If either of these be wanting, we cannot attain unto stability and assurance in the faith of it, or obedience unto it.

1st, Full it must be, to free us from all attempt of fear that any thing is detained or hidden from us that were needful for us to know. Without this the mind of man can never come to rest in the knowledge of truth. All that he knows may be useless unto him, for the want of that which he neither doth nor can know, because not revealed.

2dly, And it must be infallible also. For this divine truth whereof we treat, being concerning things unseen -- heavenly, eternal mysteries, transcending the reach of human reason -- nothing but the absolute infallibility of the revealer can bring the mind of man to assurance and acquiescency. And whereas the same truth enjoins unto us duties, many of them contrary unto our inclinations and cross unto our several

interests -- the great guides of corrupted nature -- the revelation of it must proceed from sovereign authority, that the will may comply with the mind in the embracement of it. All these are absolutely secured in the divine person of the great prophet of the church. His infinite wisdom, his infinite goodness, his essential veracity, his sovereign authority over all, give the highest assurance whereof a created understanding is capable, that nothing is detained from us -- that there is no possibility of error or mistake in what is declared unto us, nor any pretence left of declining obedience unto the commands of the truth that we do receive. This gives the soul assured rest and peace in the belief of things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can enter into the heart of man to conceive." Upon the assurance of this truth alone can it with joy prefer things invisible and eternal above all present satisfactions and desires. In the persuasion hereof can it forego the best of present enjoyments, and undergo the worst of present evils; namely, in the experience of its present efficacy, and choice of that future recompense which it doth secure. And he believes not the Gospel unto his own advantage, or the glory of God, whose faith rests not in the divine person of Jesus Christ, the great prophet of the church. And he who there finds rest unto his soul, dares not admit of any copartners with him as to instruction in the mind of God.

3dly, It was requisite unto the office of this great prophet of the church, and the discharge thereof, that he should have power and authority to send the Holy Spirit to make his revelations of divine truth effectual unto the minds of men. For the church which he was to instruct, was not only in darkness, by reason of ignorance and want of objective light or divine revelations, but was incapacitated to receive spiritual things in a due manner when revealed. Wherefore, it was the work of this prophet, not only to make known and declare the doctrines of truth, which are our external directive light, but also to irradiate and illuminate our minds, so that we might savingly apprehend them. And it is no wonder if those who are otherwise minded, who suppose themselves able to receive spiritual things, the things of God, in a due manner, upon their external proposal unto them, are regardless of the divine person of Christ as the prophet of the church. But hereon they will never have experience of the life and power of the doctrine of the Gospel, if the apostle is to be believed, 1 Cor. ii. 9-12. Now, this internal illumination of the minds of men unto the acknowledgment of the truth can be wrought in them only by the Holy Spirit of God, Eph. i. 17-19; 2 Cor. iii. 18. None, therefore, could be the prophet of the church, but he who had the power to send the Holy Spirit to enable it to receive his doctrine by the saving illumination of the minds of men. And this alone he could do, whose Spirit he is, proceeding from him; whom he therefore frequently promised so to send.

Without a respect unto these things, we cannot really be made partakers of the saving benefits and fruits of the prophetic office of Christ. And this we can have only in the exercise of faith on his divine person, which is the eternal spring from whence this office derives all life and efficacy.

The command of God, in respect unto him as the prophet of the church, is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him." Unless we actually regard him by faith as the only begotten Son of God, we can perform no duty aright in the hearing of him, nor shall we learn the truth as we ought. Hence it is that those who deny his divine person, though they pretend to attend unto him as the teacher of the church, do yet learn no truth from him, but embrace pernicious errors in the stead thereof. So it is with the Socinians, and all that follow them. For whereas they scarcely own any other office of Christ but his prophetic -- looking on him as a man sent to teach the mind of God, and to confirm his doctrine by his sufferings, whereon he was afterward highly exalted of God -- they learn nothing from him in a due manner.

But this respect unto the person of Christ is that which will ingenerate in us all those holy qualifications that are necessary to enable us to know the mind and will of God. For hence do reverence, humility, faith,

delight, and assurance, arise and flow; without whose continual exercise, in vain shall men hope to learn the will of God by the utmost of their endeavours. And the want of these things is the cause of much of that lifeless, unsanctified knowledge of the doctrine of the Gospel which is amongst many. They learn not the truth from Christ, so as to expect all teachings from his divine power. Hence they never come to know it, either in its native beauty drawing the soul into the love and delight of what they know, or in its transforming efficacy changing the mind into its own image and likeness.

(2.) The same also is the state of things with respect unto his kingly office and power. But this I have at large treated on elsewhere, and that much unto the same purpose; namely, in the exposition of the 3d verse of the 1st chapter of the Epistle unto the Hebrews. Wherefore I shall not here enlarge upon it.

Some seem to imagine, that the kingly power of Christ towards the church consists only in external rule by the Gospel and the laws thereof, requiring obedience unto the officers and rulers that he hath appointed therein. It is true, that this also belongs unto his kingly power and rule; but to suppose that it consisteth solely therein, is an ebullition from the poisonous fountain of the denial of his divine person. For if he be not God over all, whatever in words may be pretended or ascribed unto him, he is capable of no other rule or power. But indeed no one act of his kingly office can be aright conceived or acknowledged, without a respect had unto his divine person. I shall instance only unto this purpose in two things in general.

[1.] The extent of his power and rule gives evidence hereunto. It is over the whole creation of God. "All power is given him in heaven and earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. "All things are put under his feet, he only excepted who put all things under him," 1 Cor. xv. 27; and he is made "head over all things unto the church," Eph. i. 22. Not only those who are above the rule of external law, as the holy angels; and those who have cast off all such rule, as the devils themselves; but all things that in their own nature are not capable of obedience to an external law or rule, as the whole inanimate creation, heaven, and earth, and the sea, with all things in them and under them, (Phil. ii. 10,) with the dead bodies of men, which he shall raise at the last day.

97For this power over the whole creation is not only a moral right to rule and govern it; but it is also accompanied with virtue, force, or almighty power, to act, order, and dispose of it at his pleasure. So is it described by the apostle from the Psalmist, Heb. i. 10-12, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." That power is required unto his kingly office whereby he created all things in the beginning, and shall change them all, as a man folds up a vesture, in the end. Omnipotence, accompanied with eternity and immutability, are required hereunto.

It is a vain imagination, to suppose that this power can reside in a mere creature, however glorified and exalted. All essential divine properties are concurrent with it, and inseparable from it. And where are the properties of God, there is the nature of God; for his being and his properties are one and the same.

If the Lord Christ, as king of the church, be only a mere man, and be as such only to be considered, however he may be exalted and glorified -- however he may be endowed with honour, dignity, and authority -- yet he cannot put forth or act any real physical power immediately and directly, but where he is present. But this is in heaven only; for the heaven must receive him "until the times of the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21. And hereon his rule and power would be the greatest disadvantage unto the church that could befall it. For suppose it immediately under the rule of God, even the Father; his omnipotence

and omnipresence, his omniscience and infinite wisdom -- whereby he could be always present with every one of them, know all their wants, and give immediate relief according to the counsel of his will -- were a stable foundation for faith to rest upon, and an everlasting spring of consolation. But now, whereas all power, all judgment, all rule, is committed unto the Son, and the Father doth nothing towards the church but in and by him, if he have not the same divine power and properties with him, the foundation of the church's faith is cast down, and the spring of its consolation utterly stopped up.

I cannot believe in him as my heavenly king, who is not able by himself, and by the virtue of his presence with me, to make what changes and alterations he pleaseth in the minds of men, and in the whole creation of God, to relieve, preserve, and deliver me, and to raise my body at the last day.

To suppose that the Lord Christ, as the king and head of the church, hath not an infinite, divine power, whereby he is able always to relieve, succour, save, and deliver it -- if it were to be done by the alteration of the whole or any part of God's creation, so as that the fire should not burn, nor the water overwhelm them, nor men be able to retain their thoughts or ability one moment to afflict them; and that their distresses are not always effects of his wisdom, and never from the defect of his power -- is utterly to overthrow all faith, hope, and the whole of religion itself.

Ascribe therefore unto the Lord Christ, in the exercise of his kingly office, only a moral power, operative by rules and laws, with the help of external instruments -- deprive him of omnipresence and omniscience, with infinite, divine power and virtue, to be acted at his pleasure in and over the whole creation -- and you rase the foundation of all Christian faith and hope to the ground.

There are no true believers who will part with their faith herein for the whole world; namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is able, by his divine power and presence, immediately to aid, assist, relieve, and deliver them in every moment of their surprisals, fears, and dangers, in every trial or duty they may be called unto, in every difficulty they have to conflict withal. And to expect these things any otherwise but by virtue of his divine nature, is woefully to deceive our own souls. For this is the work of God.

[2.] The rule of Christ, as king of the church, is internal and spiritual, over the minds, souls, and consciences of all that do believe. There is no one gracious acting of soul in any one believer, at any time in the whole world, either in opposition unto sin or the performance of duty, but it is influenced and under the guidance of the kingly power of Christ. I suppose we have herein not only the common faith, but also the common spiritual sense and experience, of them all. They know that in their spiritual life it is he that liveth in them as the efficient cause of all its acts and that without him they can do nothing. Unto him they have respect in every the most secret and retired acting of grace, not only performed as under his eye, but by his assistance; on every occasion do they immediately, in the internal acting of their minds, look unto him, as one more present with their souls than they are with themselves; and have no thoughts of the least distance of his knowledge or power. And two things are required hereto.

1st, That he be  
-- that he have an actual inspection into all the frames, dispositions, thoughts, and internal actings, of all believers in the whole world, at all times, and every moment. Without this, he cannot bear that rule in their souls and consciences which we have described, nor can they act faith in him, as their occasions do require. No man can live by faith on Christ, no man can depend on his sovereign power, who is not persuaded that all the frames of his heart, all the secret groans and sighs of his spirit, all the inward labourings of his soul

against sin, and after conformity to himself, are continually under his eye and cognizance. Wherefore it is said, that all things are naked and opened unto his eyes, Heb. iv. 13. And he says of himself, that he "searcheth" (that is, knoweth) "the hearts and reins of men," Rev. ii. 23. And if these things are not the peculiar properties of the divine nature, I know nothing that may be so esteemed.

2dly, There is required hereunto an influence of power into all the acting of the souls of believers; -- all intimate, efficacious operation with them in every duty, and under every temptation. These all of them do look for, expect, and receive from him, as the king and head of the church. This also is an effect of divine and infinite power. And to deny these things unto the Lord Christ, is to rase the foundation of Christian religion. Neither faith in, nor love unto him, nor dependence on him, nor obedience unto his authority, can be preserved one moment, without a persuasion of his immediate intuition and inspection into the hearts, minds, and thoughts of all men, with a real influence into all the acting of the life of God in all them that believe. And the want of the faith hereof is that which hath disjoined the minds of many from adherence unto him, and hath produced a lifeless carcass of the Christian religion, instead of the saving power thereof.

(3.) The same may be said concerning his sacerdotal office, and all the acts of it. It was in and by the human nature that he offered himself a sacrifice for us. He had somewhat of his own to offer, Heb. viii. 3; and to this end a body was prepared for him, chap. x. 5. But it was not the work of a man, by one offering, and that of himself, to expiate the sins of the whole church, and forever to perfect them that are sanctified, which he did, Heb. x. 14. God was to purchase his church "with his own blood," Acts xx. 28. But this also I have spoken to at large elsewhere.

This is the sum of what we plead for: We can have no due consideration of the offices of Christ, can receive no benefit by them, nor perform any act of duty with respect unto them, or any of them, unless faith in his divine person be actually exercised as the foundation of the whole. For that is it whence all their glory, power, and efficacy are derived. Whatever, therefore, we do with respect unto his rule, whatever we receive by the communication of his Spirit and grace, whatever we learn from his Word by the teachings of his Spirit, whatever benefit we believe, expect, and receive, by his sacrifice and intercession on our behalf; our faith in them all, and concerning them all, is terminated on his divine person. The church is saved by his offices, because they are his. This is the substance of 100the testimony given concerning him, by God, even the Father, 1 John v. 10, 11. "This is the record" that God hath testified concerning his Son, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Eternal life is given unto us, as it was wrought out and procured by the mediation of Christ on our behalf. But yet in him it was originally, and from him do we receive it in the discharge of his office; for this life is in the Son of God.

Hence it is that all those by whom the divine person of Christ is denied, are forced to give such a description of his offices, as that it is utterly impossible that the church should be saved by the discharge of them.

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