

# The Nature, Operations, and Causes of Divine Love, as It Respects the Person of Christ

by John Owen

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*The sermon explores the nature, object, and application of divine love, highlighting its essential properties, incarnate form, and union with the person of Christ.*

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:9

**Topics:** "Divine Love", "The Person of Christ"

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## Description

John Owen emphasizes the profound nature of divine love as it pertains to Christ, explaining that God created our capacity for love to be directed towards Him, rather than transient earthly things. He argues that true love arises from recognizing God's infinite goodness, which is fully manifested in Christ, making Him the ultimate object of our affection. Owen highlights that our love for God is rooted in His love for us, particularly through the sacrifice of Christ, and that this love should inspire a desire for union and conformity to God's nature. He also discusses the importance of understanding Christ's dual nature as both divine and human, which enhances our love for Him. Ultimately, Owen calls believers to engage deeply with the scriptural portrayal of Christ to cultivate a genuine love for Him.

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## Transcript

That we may the better understand that love unto the person of Christ which we plead for, some things must be premised concerning the nature of divine love in general; and thereon its application unto the particular acting and exercise of it which we inquire into will be plain and easy.

God hath endowed our nature with a faculty and ability of fixing our love upon himself. Many can understand nothing of love but the adherence of their minds and souls unto things visible and sensible, capable of a present natural enjoyment. For things unseen, especially such as are eternal and infinite, they suppose they have a veneration, a religious respect, a devout adoration; but how they should love them, they cannot understand. And the apostle doth grant that there is a greater difficulty in loving things that cannot be seen, than in loving those which are always visibly present unto us, 1 John iv. 20. Howbeit, this divine love hath a more fixed station and prevalence in the minds of men than any other kind of love whatever. For --

1. The principal end why God endued our natures with that great and ruling affection, that hath the most eminent and peculiar power and interest in our souls, was, in the first place, that it might be fixed on

himself -- that it might be the instrument of our adherence unto him. He did not create this affection in us, that we might be able by it to cast ourselves into the embraces of things natural and sensual. No affection hath such power in the soul to cause it to cleave unto its object, and to work it into a conformity unto it. Most other affections are transient in their operations, and work by a transport of nature -- as anger, joy, fear, and the like; but love is capable of a constant exercise, is a spring unto all other affections, and unites the soul with an efficacy not easy to be expressed unto its object. And shall we think that God, who made all things for himself, did create this ruling affection in and with our natures, merely that we might be able to turn from him, and cleave unto other things with a power and faculty above any we have of adherence 151unto him? Wherefore, at our first creation, and in our primitive condition, love was the very soul and quickening principle of the life of God; and on our adherence unto him thereby the continuance of our relation unto him did depend. The law, rule, and measure of it was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul." For this end did God create this affection in us. Not only our persons in their nature and being, but in all their powers and faculties, were fitted and prepared unto this end, of living unto God, and coming unto the enjoyment of him. And all their exercise on created objects was to be directed unto this end. Wherefore, the placing of our love on anything before God, or above him is a formal expression of our apostasy from him.

2. Divine excellencies are a proper, adequate object of our love. The will, indeed, can adhere unto nothing in love, but what the understanding apprehends as unto its truth and being; but it is not necessary that the understanding do fully comprehend the whole nature of that which the will doth so adhere unto. Where a discovery is made unto and by the mind of real goodness and amiableness, the will there can close with its affections. And these are apprehended as absolutely the most perfect in the divine nature and holy properties of it. Whereas, therefore, not only that which is the proper object of love is in the divine excellencies, but it is there only perfectly and absolutely, without the mixture of anything that should give it an alloy, as there is in all creatures, they are the most suitable and adequate object of our love.

There is no greater discovery of the depravation of our natures by sin and degeneracy of our wills from their original rectitude, than that -- whereas we are so prone to the love of other things, and therein do seek for satisfaction unto our souls where it is not to be obtained -- it is so hard and difficult to raise our hearts unto the love of God.

Were it not for that depravation, he would always appear as the only suitable and satisfactory object unto our affections.

3. The especial object of divine, gracious love, is the divine goodness. "How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty!" Zech. ix. 17. Nothing is amiable or a proper object of love, but what is good, and as it is so. Hence divine goodness, which is infinite, hath an absolutely perfect amiableness accompanying it. Because his goodness is inexpressible, his beauty is so. "How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty!" Hence are we called to give thanks unto the Lord, and to rejoice in him -- which are the effects of love -- because he is good, Ps. cvi. 1; cxxxvi. 1.

Neither is divine goodness the especial object of our love as absolutely considered; but we have a respect unto it as comprehensive of all that mercy, grace, and bounty, which are suited to give us the 152best relief in our present condition and an eternal future reward. Infinite goodness, exerting itself in all that mercy, grace, faithfulness, and bounty, which are needful unto our relief and blessedness in our present condition, is the proper object of our love. Whereas, therefore, this is done only in Christ, there can be no true love of the divine goodness, but in and through him alone.

The goodness of God, as a creator, preserver, and rewarder, was a sufficient, yea, the adequate object of all love antecedently unto the entrance of sin and misery. In them, in God under those considerations, might the soul of man find full satisfaction as unto its present and future blessedness. But since the passing of sin, misery, and death upon us, our love can find no amiableness in any goodness -- no rest, complacency, and satisfaction in any -- but what is effectual in that grace and mercy by Christ, which we stand in need of for our present recovery and future reward. Nor doth God require of us that we should love him otherwise but as he "is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." So the apostle fully declares it: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 9, 10, 16. God is love, of a nature infinitely good and gracious, so as to be the only object of all divine love. But this love can no way be known, or be so manifested unto us, as that we may and ought to love him, but by his love in Christ, his sending of him and loving us in him. Before this, without this, we do not, we cannot love God. For "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is the cause, the spring and fountain, of all our love to him. They are but empty notions and imaginations, which some speculative persons please themselves withal, about love unto the divine goodness absolutely considered. For however infinitely amiable it may be in itself, it is not so really unto them, it is not suited unto their state and condition, without the consideration of the communications of it unto us in Christ.

4. These things being premised, we may consider the especial nature of this divine love, although I acknowledge that the least part of what believers have an experience of in their own souls can be expressed at least by me. Some few things I shall mention, which may give us a shadow of it, but not the express image of the thing itself.

(1.) Desire of union and enjoyment is the first vital act of this love. The soul, upon the discovery of the excellencies of God, earnestly desires to be united unto them -- to be brought near unto that enjoyment of them whereof it is capable, and wherein alone it can find rest and satisfaction. This is essential unto all love; it unites the mind unto its object, and rests not but in enjoyment. God's love unto us ariseth out of the overflowing of his own immense goodness, whereof he will communicate the fruits and effects unto us. God is love; and herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his only-begotten Son. Yet also doth this love of God tend to the bringing of us unto him, not that he may enjoy us, but that he may be enjoyed by us. This answers the desire of enjoyment in us, Job xiv. 15: "Thou shalt call me;" (that is, out of the dust at the last day;) "thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." God's love will not rest, until it hath brought us unto himself. But our love unto God ariseth from a sense of our own wants -- our insufficiency to come unto rest in ourselves, or to attain unto blessedness by our own endeavours. In this state, seeing all in God, and expecting all from the suitableness of his excellencies unto our rest and satisfaction, our souls cleave unto him, with a desire of the nearest union whereof our natures are capable. We are made for him, and cannot rest until we come unto him.

Our goodness extends not unto God; we cannot profit him by any thing that we are, or can do. Wherefore, his love unto us hath not respect originally unto any good in ourselves, but is a gracious, free act of his own. He doeth good for no other reason but because he is good. Nor can his infinite perfections take any cause for their original actings without himself. He wants nothing that he would supply by the enjoyment of us. But we have indigency in ourselves to cause our love to seek an object without ourselves. And so his

goodness -- with the mercy, grace, and bounty included therein -- is the cause, reason, and object of our love. We love them for themselves; and because we are wanting and indigent, we love them with a desire of union and enjoyment -- wherein we find that our satisfaction and blessedness doth consist. Love in general unites the mind unto the object -- the person loving unto the thing or person beloved. So is it expressed in an instance of human, temporary, changeable love, -- namely, that of Jonathan to David. His soul "was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul," 1 Sam. xviii. 1. Love had so effectually united them, as that the soul of David was as his own. Hence are those expressions of this divine love, by "cleaving unto God, following hard after him, thirsting, panting after him," with the like intimations of the most earnest endeavours of our nature after union and enjoyment.

When the soul hath a view by faith (which nothing else can give 154it) of the goodness of God as manifested in Christ -- that is of the essential excellencies of his nature as exerting themselves in him -- it reacheth after him with its most earnest embraces, and is restless until it comes unto perfect fruition. It sees in God the fountain of life, and would drink of the "river of his pleasures," Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9 -- that in his "presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore," Ps. xvi. 11. It longs and pants to drink of that fountain -- to bathe itself in that river of pleasures; and wherein it comes short of present enjoyment, it lives in hopes that when we "awake, it shall be satisfied with his likeness," Ps. xvii. 15. There is nothing grievous unto a soul filled with this love, but what keeps it from the full enjoyment of these excellencies of God. What doth so naturally and necessarily, it groans under. Such is our present state in the body, wherein, in some sense, we are "absent from the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 4, 8, 9. And what doth so morally, in the deviations of its will and affections, as sin -- it hates and abhors and loathes itself for. Under the conduct of this love, the whole tendency of the soul is unto the enjoyment of God; -- it would be lost in itself, and found in him, -- nothing in itself, and all in him. Absolute complacency herein -- that God is what he is, that he should be what he is, and nothing else, and that as such we may be united unto him, and enjoy Him according to the capacity of our natures is the life of divine love.

(2.) It is a love of assimilation. It contains in it a desire and intense endeavour to be like unto God, according unto our capacity and measure. The soul sees all goodness, and consequently all that is amiable and lovely, in God -- the want of all which it finds in itself. The fruition of his goodness is that which it longs for as its utmost end, and conformity unto it as the means thereof. There is no man who loves not God sincerely, but indeed he would have him to be somewhat that he is not, that he might be the more like unto him. This such persons are pleased withal whilst they can fancy it in any thing, Ps. l. 21. They that love him, would have him be all that he is -- as he is, and nothing else; and would be themselves like unto him. And as love hath this tendency, and is that which gives disquietment unto the soul when and wherein we are unlike unto God, so it stirs up constant endeavours after assimilation unto him, and hath a principal efficacy unto that end. Love is the principle that actually assimilates and conforms us unto God, as faith is the principle which originally disposeth thereunto. In our renovation into the image of God, the transforming power is radically seated in faith, but acts itself by love. Love proceeding from faith gradually changeth the soul into the likeness of God; and the more it is in exercise, the more is that change effected.

155To labour after conformity unto God by outward actions only, is to make an image of the living God, hewed out of the stock of a dead tree. It is from this vital principle of love that we are not forced into it as by engines, but naturally grow up into the likeness and image of God. For when it is duly affected with the excellencies of God in Christ, it fills the mind with thoughts and contemplations on them, and excites all the affections unto a delight in them. And where the soul acts itself constantly in the mind's contemplation, and the delight of the affections, it will produce assimilation unto the object of them. To love God is the

only way and means to be like unto him.

(3.) It is a love of complacency, and therein of benevolence. Upon that view which we have by spiritual light and faith of the divine goodness, exerting itself in the way before described, our souls do approve of all that is in God, applaud it, adore it, and acquiesce in it. Hence two great duties do arise, and hereon do they depend. First, Joyful ascriptions of glory and honour unto God. All praise and thanksgiving, all blessing, all assignation of glory unto him, because of his excellencies and perfections, do arise from our satisfactory complacency in them. The righteous "rejoice in the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," Ps. xcvi. 12. They are so pleased and satisfied at the remembrance of God's holiness, that it fills their hearts with joy and causeth them to break forth in praises. Praise is nothing but an outward expression of the inward complacency of our hearts in the divine perfections and their operations. And, secondly, Love herein acts itself by benevolence, as the constant inclination of the mind unto all things wherein the glory of God is concerned. It wills all the things wherein the name of God may be sanctified, his praises made glorious, and his will done on earth as it is in heaven. As God says of his own love unto us, that "he will rest in his love, he will joy over us [thee] with singing," Zeph. iii. 17 -- as having the greatest complacency in it, rejoicing over us with his "whole heart and his whole soul," Jer. xxxii. 41; -- so, according unto our measure, do we by love rest in the glorious excellencies of God, rejoicing in them with our whole hearts and our whole souls.

(4.) This divine love is a love of friendship. The communion which we have with God therein is so intimate, and accompanied with such spiritual boldness, as gives it that denomination. So Abraham was called "The friend of God," Isa. xli. 8; James ii. 23. And because of that mutual trust which is between friends, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant," Ps. xxv. 14. For, as our Saviour teacheth us, "servants" -- that is, those who are so, and no more -- "know not what their lord doeth;" he rules them, commands them, or requires obedience from them; but as unto his secret -- his design and purpose, his counsel and love -- they know nothing of it. But saith he unto his disciples, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you," John xv. 15. He proves them to be rightly called his friends, because of the communication of the secret of his mind unto them.

This is the great difference between them who are only servants in the house of God, and those who are so servants as to be friends also. The same commands are given unto all equally, and the same duties are required of all equally, inasmuch as they are equally servants; but those who are no more but so, know nothing of the secret counsel, love, and grace of God, in a due manner. For the natural man receiveth not the things that are of God. Hence all their obedience is servile. They know neither the principal motives unto it nor the ends of it. But they who are so servants as to be friends also, they know what their Lord doeth; the secret of the Lord is with them, and he shows them his covenant. They are admitted into an intimate acquaintance with the mind of Christ, ("we have the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. ii. 16,) and are thereon encouraged to perform the obedience of servants, with the love and delight of friends.

The same love of friendship is expressed by that intimate converse with, and especial residence that is between God and believers. God dwelleth in them, and they dwell in God; for God is love, 1 John iv. 16. "If a man," saith the Lord Christ, "love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23; and, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. These are not empty sound of words; -- there is substance under them, there is truth in them. Those whose hearts are duly exercised in and unto the love of God have experience of the refreshing approaches both of the Father

and of the Son unto their souls, in the communications of a sense of their love, and pledges of their abode with them.

These things have I briefly premised, concerning the nature of divine love, that we may the better apprehend what we understand by it, in the application of it unto the person of Christ. For --

1. The formal object of this love is the essential properties of the divine nature -- its infinite goodness in particular. Wherever these are, there is the object and reason of this love. But they are all of them in the person of the Son, no less than in the person of the Father. As, therefore, we love the Father on this account, so are we to love the Son also. But --

2. The Person of Christ is to be considered as he was incarnate, or clothed with our nature. And this takes nothing off from the formal reason of this love, but only makes an addition unto the motives of it. This, indeed, for a season veiled the loveliness of his divine excellencies, and so turned aside the eyes of many from him. For when he took on him "the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation," he had, unto them who looked on him with carnal eyes, "neither form nor comeliness," that he should be desired or be loved. Howbeit, the entire person of Christ, God and man, is the object of this divine love, in all the acts of the whole exercise of it. That single effect of infinite wisdom and grace, in the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Son of God, renders him the object of this love in a peculiar manner. The way whereby we may attain this peculiar love, and the motives unto it, shall close these considerations.

A due consideration of, and meditation on, the proposal of the person of Christ unto us in the Scripture, are the proper foundation of this love. This is the formal reason of our faith in him, and love unto him. He is so proposed unto us in the Scripture, that we may believe in him and love him, and for that very end. And in particular with respect unto our love, to ingenerate it in us, and to excite it unto its due exercise, are those excellencies of his person -- as the principal effect of divine wisdom and goodness, which we have before insisted on -- frequently proposed unto us. To this end is he represented as "altogether lovely," and the especial glories of his person are delineated, yea, drawn to the life, in the holy records of the Old and New Testaments. It is no work of fancy or imagination -- it is not the feigning images in our minds of such things as are meet to satisfy our carnal affections, to excite and act them; but it is a due adherence unto that object which is represented unto faith in the proposal of the gospel. Therein, as in a glass, do we behold the glory of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and have our souls filled with transforming affections unto him.

The whole Book of Canticles is nothing but a mystical declaration of the mutual love between Christ and the church. And it is expressed by all such ways and means as may represent it intense, fervent, and exceeding all other love whatever; which none, I suppose, will deny, at least on the part of Christ. And a great part of it consists in such descriptions of the person of Christ and his love as may render him amiable and desirable unto our souls, even "altogether lovely." To what end doth the Holy Spirit so graphically describe and represent unto us the beauty and desirableness of his person, if it be not to ingenerate love in us unto him? All want of love unto him on this proposal is the effect of prevalent unbelief. It is pretended that the descriptions given of Christ in this book are allegorical, from whence nothing can be gathered or concluded. But God forbid we should so reflect on the wisdom and love of the Holy Spirit unto the church -- that he hath proposed unto the faith of the church an empty sound and noise of words, without mind or sense. The expressions he uses are figurative, and the whole nature of the discourse, as unto its outward structure, is allegorical. But the things intended are real and substantial;

and the metaphors used in the expression of them are suited, in a due attendance unto the analogy of faith, to convey a spiritual understanding and sense of the things themselves proposed in them. The church of God will not part with the unspeakable advantage and consolation -- those supports of faith and incentives of love -- which it receives by that divine proposal of the person of Christ and his love which is made therein, because some men have no experience of them nor understanding in them. The faith and love of believers is not to be regulated by the ignorance and boldness of them who have neither the one nor the other. The title of the 45th Psalm is, "A song of loves;" -- that is, of the mutual love of Christ and the church. And unto this end -- that our souls may be stirred up unto the most ardent affection towards him -- is a description given us of his person, as "altogether lovely." To what other end is he so evidently delineated in the whole harmony of his divine beauties by the pencil of the Holy Spirit?

Not to insist on particular testimonies, it is evident unto all whose eyes are opened to discern these things, that there is no property of the divine nature which is peculiarly amiable -- such as are goodness, grace, love, and bounty, with infinite power and holiness -- but it is represented and proposed unto us in the person of the Son of God, to this end, that we should love him above all, and cleave unto him. There is nothing in the human nature, in that fulness of grace and truth which dwelt therein, in that inhabitation of the Spirit which was in him without measure, in any thing of those "all things" wherein he hath the pre-eminence -- nothing in his love, condescension, grace, and mercy -- nothing in the work that he fulfilled, what he did and suffered therein -- nothing in the benefits we receive thereby -- nothing in the power and glory that he is exalted unto at the right hand of God -- but it is set forth in the Scripture and proposed unto us, that, believing in him, we may love him with all our hearts and souls. And, besides all this, that singular, that infinite effect of divine wisdom, whereunto there is nothing like in all the works of God, and wherewith none of them may be compared -- namely, the constitution of his person by the union of his natures therein, whereby he becomes unto us the image of the invisible God, and wherein all the blessed excellencies of his distinct natures are made most illustriously conspicuous in becoming one entire principle of all his mediatory operations on our behalf -- is proposed unto us as the complete object of our faith and love. This is that person whose loveliness and beauty all the angels of God, all the holy ones above, do eternally admire and adore. In him are the infinite treasures of divine wisdom and goodness continually represented unto them. This is he who is the joy, the delight, the love, the glory of the church below. "Thou whom our souls do love," is the title whereby they know him and converse with him, Cant. i. 7; iii. 1, 4. This is he who is the Desire of all nations -- the Beloved of God and men.

The mutual intercourse on this ground of love between Christ and the church, is the life and soul of the whole creation; for on the account hereof all things consist in him.

There is more glory under the eye of God, in the sighs, groans, and mournings of poor souls filled with the love of Christ, after the enjoyment of him according to his promises -- in their fervent prayers for his manifestation of himself unto them -- in the refreshments and unspeakable joys which they have in his gracious visits and embraces of his love -- than in the thrones and diadems of all the monarchs on the earth. Nor will they themselves part with the ineffable satisfactions which they have in these things, for all that this world can do for them or unto them. "Mallem ruere cum Christo, quam regnare cum Cæsare." These things have not only rendered prisons and dungeons more desirable unto them than the most goodly palaces, on future accounts, but have made them really places of such refreshment and joys as men shall seek in vain to extract out of all the comforts that this world can afford.

O curvæ in terras animæ et cœlestium inanes!

Many there are who, not comprehending, not being affected with, that divine, spiritual description of the person of Christ which is given us by the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, do feign unto themselves false representations of him by images and pictures, so as to excite carnal and corrupt affections in their minds. By the help of their outward senses, they reflect on their imaginations the shape of a human body, cast into postures and circumstances dolorous or triumphant; and so, by the working of their fancy, raise a commotion of mind in themselves, which they suppose to be love unto Christ. But all these idols are teachers of lies. The true beauty and amiableness of the person of Christ, which is the formal object and cause of divine love, is so far from being represented herein, as that the mind is thereby wholly diverted from the contemplation of it. For no more can be so pictured unto us but what may belong unto a mere man, and what is arbitrarily referred unto Christ, not by faith, but by corrupt imagination.

The beauty of the person of Christ, as represented in the Scripture, 160consists in things invisible unto the eyes of flesh. They are such as no hand of man can represent or shadow. It is the eye of faith alone that can see this King in his beauty. What else can contemplate on the untreated glories of his divine nature? Can the hand of man represent the union of his natures in the same person, wherein he is peculiarly amiable? What eye can discern the mutual communications of the properties of his different natures in the same person, which depends thereon, whence it is that God laid down his life for us, and purchased his church with his own blood? In these things, O vain man! doth the loveliness of the person of Christ unto the souls of believers consist, and not in those strokes of art which fancy hath guided a skilful hand and pencil unto. And what eye of flesh can discern the inhabitation of the Spirit in all fulness in the human nature? Can his condescension, his love, his grace, his power, his compassion, his offices, his fitness and ability to save sinners, be deciphered on a tablet, or engraven on wood or stone? However such pictures may be adorned, however beautified and enriched, they are not that Christ which the soul of the spouse doth love; -- they are not any means of representing his love unto us, or of conveying our love unto him; -- they only divert the minds of superstitious persons from the Son of God, unto the embraces of a cloud, composed of fancy and imagination.

Others there are who abhor these idols, and when they have so done, commit sacrilege. As they reject images, so they seem to do all love unto the person of Christ, distinct from other acts of obedience, as a fond imagination. But the most superstitious love unto Christ -- that is, love acted in ways tainted with superstition -- is better than none at all. But with what eyes do such persons read the Scriptures? With what hearts do they consider them? What do they conceive is the intention of the Holy Ghost in all those descriptions which he gives us of the person of Christ as amiable and desirable above all things, making wherewithal a proposal of him unto our affections -- inciting us to receive him by faith, and to cleave unto him in love? yea, to what end is our nature endued with this affection -- unto what end is the power of it renewed in us by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit -- if it may not be fixed on this most proper and excellent object of it?

This is the foundation of our love unto Christ -- namely, the revelation and proposal of him unto us in the Scripture as altogether lovely. The discovery that is made therein of the glorious excellencies and endowments of his person -- of his love, his goodness, and grace -- of his worth and work -- is that which engageth the affections of believers unto him. It may be said, that if there be such a proposal of him made unto all promiscuously, then all would equally 161discern his amiableness and be affected with it, who assent equally unto the truth of that revelation. But it hath always fallen out otherwise. In the days of his flesh, some that looked on him could see neither "form nor comeliness" in him wherefore he should be

desired; others saw his glory -- "glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." To some he is precious; unto others he is disallowed and rejected -- a stone which the builders refused, when others brought it forth, crying, "Grace, grace unto it!" as the head of the corner. Some can see nothing but weakness in him; unto others the wisdom and power of God do evidently shine forth in him. Wherefore it must be said, that notwithstanding that open, plain representation that is made of him in the Scripture, unless the Holy Spirit gives us eyes to discern it, and circumcise our hearts by the cutting off corrupt prejudices and all effects of unbelief, implanting in them, by the efficacy of his grace, this blessed affection of love unto him, all these things will make no impression on our minds.

As it was with the people on the giving of the law, notwithstanding all the great and mighty works which God had wrought among them, yet having not given them "a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear" -- which he affirms that he had not done, Deut. xxix. 4, -- they were not moved unto faith or obedience by them; so is it in the preaching of the gospel. Notwithstanding all the blessed revelation that is made of the excellencies of the person of Christ therein, yet those into whose hearts God doth not shine to give the knowledge of his glory in his face, can discern nothing of it, nor are their hearts affected with it.

We do not, therefore, in these things, follow "cunningly-devised fables." We do not indulge unto our own fancies and imaginations; -- they are not unaccountable raptures or ecstasies which are pretended unto, nor such an artificial concatenation of thoughts as some ignorant of these things do boast that they can give an account of. Our love to Christ ariseth alone from the revelation that is made of him in the Scripture -- is ingenerated, regulated, measured, and is to be judged thereby.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-owen/the-nature-operations-and-causes-of-divine-love-as-it-respects-the-person-of-chr/>

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