

# The Person of Christ the Great Repository of Sacred Truth

by John Owen

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*The sermon articulates that the person of Christ is the essential source and repository of all divine truths, illuminating their significance and transformative power in the believer's life.*

**Scripture:** John 1:4-5, John 1:18, John 14:6, Acts 20:32, Romans 11:33, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Ephesians 4:21-24, Philippians 3:8-10, Colossians 2:9, Titus 1:1

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

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## Description

John Owen emphasizes that the person of Christ is the ultimate source and representation of divine truth, which is essential for understanding God's nature and will. He explains that all truth derives from God, with Christ being the essential image of the Father and the repository of all supernatural truths. Owen argues that without recognizing Christ's central role, spiritual truths lose their light and efficacy, rendering them ineffective in transforming lives. He warns that rejecting Christ leads to a distortion of all other truths, as they are interconnected through Him. Ultimately, true knowledge of divine truth is only possible through a relationship with Christ, who is the life and light of all understanding.

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## Transcript

Divine supernatural truth is called by the apostle, "The truth which is after godliness:" Tit. i. 1. Whereas, therefore, the person of Christ is the great mystery of godliness, we must, in the next place, inquire -- What is the relation of spiritual supernatural truth thereunto? And this I shall do, in pursuit of what was proposed in the foregoing chapter, viz., that he is the great representative unto the church, of God, his holy properties, and the counsels of his will?

All divine truth may be referred unto two heads. First, that which is essentially so; and then that which is so declaratively. The first is God himself, the other is the counsel of his will.

First, God himself is the first and only essential Truth, in whose being and nature the springs of all truth do lie. Whatever is truth -- so far as it is so, derives from him, is an emanation from that eternal fountain of it. Being, truth, and goodness, is the principal notion of God; and in him they are all the same. How this is represented in Christ -- as in himself he is the essential image of the Father, and as incarnate the representative image of him unto us -- hath been declared.

Secondly, The counsels of God are the next spring and cause -- as also the subject-matter or substance -- of all truth that is so declaratively. Divine truth is "the declaration of the counsel of God:" Acts xx. 27. Of them all the person of Christ is the sacred repository and treasury -- in him are they to be learned. All their efficacy and use depend on their relation unto him. He is the centre and circumference of all the lines of truth -- that is, which is divine, spiritual, and supernatural. And the beauty of it is presented unto us only in his face or person. We see it not, we know it not, but 80as God shines into our hearts to give us the knowledge of it therein: 2 Cor. iv. 6.

So he testifieth of himself, "I am the truth:" John xiv. 6. He is so essentially -- as he is one with the Father, the God of truth: Deut. xxxii. 4. He is so efficiently -- as by him alone it is fully and effectually declared; for "no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him:" John i. 18. He is so substantially -- in opposition unto the types and shadows of the Old Testament; for in him dwelt "the fulness of the godhead bodily:" Col. ii. 9. "The body is of Christ:" verse 17. He is so subjectively -- for all divine truth, relating to the saving knowledge of God, is treasured up in him. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" verse 3. That is, the wisdom and knowledge of God -- in his counsels concerning the vocation, sanctification, and salvation, of the church -- concerning which the apostle falls into that holy admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Rom. xi. 33. And they are called "treasures" on a twofold account, both mentioned together by the Psalmist. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O Lord; how great is the sum of them!" They are treasures, because precious and invaluable -- and are therefore usually preferred above all earthly treasures which men most highly esteem: Prov. iii. 14, 15. And they are so, because of the greatness of the sum of them; and therefore also called "unsearchable riches:" Eph. iii. 8. These precious, unsearchable treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God -- that is, all divine supernatural truths -- are hid, or safely deposited, in Christ -- in and from whom alone they are to be learned and received.

So we are said to learn the truth as it is in Jesus: Eph. iv. 21. And the knowledge of all evangelical sacred truth is, in the Scripture, most frequently expressed by the knowledge of Him: John viii. 19; xvii. 3; 2 Cor. ii. 14; iv. 5, 6; Eph. i. 17; Phil. iii. 8, 10; 1 John i. 1, 2; ii. 4, 13, 14; v. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 20.

Setting aside what we have discoursed and proved before -- concerning the laying of the foundation of all the counsels of God in the person of Christ, and the representation of them in the ineffable constitution thereof -- I shall give some few instances of this relation of all supernatural truths unto him -- manifesting that we cannot learn them, nor know them, but with a due respect thereunto.

1. There are two things wherein the glory of truth doth consist. (1.) Its light. (2) Its efficacy or power. And both these do all supernatural truths derive from this relation unto Christ.

(1.) No truth whatever brings any spiritual light unto the mind, but by virtue thereof. "In him is life, and the life is the light of 81men:" John i. 4. He is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world:" verse 9. Wherefore, as truth is the only means of illumination, so it cannot communicate any light unto the mind, but only as it is a beam from him, as it is an organ to convey it from that fountain. Separated from him and its relation unto him, it will not retain, it cannot communicate, any real spiritual light or understanding to the souls of men. How should it, if all light be originally in him -- as the Scripture testifieth? Then alone is the mind irradiated with heavenly truth, when it is received as proceeding from, and leading unto, the Sun of Righteousness -- the blessed spring of all spiritual light -- which is Christ himself. Whatever notional knowledge men may have of divine truths, as they are doctrinally proposed in the Scripture, yet -- if they know them not in their respect unto the person of Christ as the foundation of the

counsels of God -- if they discern not how they proceed from him, and centre in him -- they will bring no spiritual, saving light unto their understanding. For all spiritual life and light is in him, and from him alone. An instance hereof we have in the Jews. They have the Scriptures of the Old Testament, wherein the substance of all divine truth is revealed and expressed; and they are diligent in the study of them; howbeit their minds are not at all illuminated nor irradiated by the truths contained in them, but they live and walk in horrible darkness. And the only reason hereof is, because they know not, because they reject, the relation of them unto Christ -- without which they are deprived of all enlightening power.

(2.) Efficacy or power is the second property of divine truth. And the end of this efficacy is to make us like unto God: Eph. iv. 20-24. The mortification of sin, the renovation of our natures, the sanctification of our minds, hearts, and affections, the consolation of our souls, with their edification in all the parts of the life of God, and the like, are the things that God hath designed to effect by his truth; (John xvii. 17;) whence it is able to "build us up, and give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified:" Acts xx. 32. But it is from their relation unto the person of Christ that they have any thing of this power and efficacy. For they have it no otherwise but as they are conveyances of his grace unto the souls of men. So 1 John i. 1, 2.

Wherefore, as professors of the truth, if separated from Christ as unto real union, are withering branches -- so truths professed, if doctrinally separated from him, or their respect unto him, have no living power or efficacy in the souls of men. When Christ is formed in the heart by them, when he dwelleth plentifully in the soul through their operation, then, and not else, do they put forth their proper power and efficacy. Otherwise, they are as waters separated from the fountain -- they quickly dry up or become a noisome puddle; or as a beam interrupted from its continuity unto the sun -- it is immediately deprived of light.

2. All divine spiritual truths are declarative, either of the grace and love of God unto us, or [of] our duty, obedience, and gratitude unto him. But, as unto these things, Christ is all and in all; we can have no due apprehensions of the love and grace of God, no understanding of the divine truths of the Word -- wherein they are revealed, and whereby they are exhibited unto them that believe -- but in the exercise of faith on Christ himself. For in, by, and from him alone, it is that they are proposed unto us, that we are made partakers of them. It is from his fulness that all grace is received. No truth concerning them can, by any imagination, be separated from him. He is the life and soul of all such truths -- without which, they, as they are written in the Word, are but a dead letter, and that of such a character as is illegible unto us, as unto any real discovery of the grace and love of God. And as unto those of the other sort, which are instructive unto us in our duty, obedience, and gratitude -- we cannot come unto a practical compliance with any one of them, but by the aids of grace received from him. For without him we can do nothing; (John xv. 5;) and he alone understands divine truth who doeth it: John vii. 17. There is not, therefore, any one text of Scripture which presseth our duty unto God, that we can so understand as to perform that duty in an acceptable manner, without an actual regard unto Christ, from whom alone we receive ability for the performance of it, and in or through whom alone it is accepted with God.

3. All the evidence of divine spiritual truth, and all the foundation of our real interest in the things whereof it is a declaration -- as to benefit, advantage, and comfort -- depend on their relation unto Christ. We may take an instance in one article of divine truth, which seems to be most disengaged from any such relation, namely, the resurrection of the dead. But there is no man who rightly believes or comprehends this truth, who doth it not upon the evidence given unto it, and example of it, in the person of Christ rising from the dead. Nor can any man have a comfortable expectation or faith of an especial interest in a blessed resurrection, (which is our whole concern in that truth, Phil. iii. 11,) but by virtue of a mystical union unto him, as the head of the church that shall be raised unto glory. Both these the apostle inserts upon at large,

1 Cor. xv. So is it with all other truths whatever.

Wherefore, all divine supernatural truths revealed in the Scripture, being nothing but the declaration of these counsels of God, whose foundation was laid in the person of Christ; and whereas they are all expressive of the love, wisdom, goodness, and grace of God unto us, or instructive in our obedience and duty to him -- all the actings of God towards us, and all ours towards him, being in and through him alone; and whereas all the life and power of these truths, all their beauty, symmetry, and harmony in their union and conjunction, which is expressive of divine wisdom, is all from him, who, as a living spirit diffused through the whole system, both acts and animates it -- all the treasures of truth, wisdom, and knowledge, may be well said to be hid in him. And we may consider some things that ensue hereon.

1. Hence it is, that those who reject the divine person of Christ -- who believe it not, who discern not the wisdom, grace, love, and power of God therein -- do constantly reject or corrupt all other spiritual truths of divine revelation. Nor can it otherwise be. For they have a consistency only in their relation unto the mystery of godliness -- "God manifest in the flesh" -- and from thence derive their sense and meaning. This being removed -- the truth, in all other articles of religion, immediately falls to the ground.

An instance hereof we have in the Socinians. For, although they retain the common notions of the unity and existence of the divine nature, which are indelibly fixed on the minds of men, yet is there no one truth that belongs peculiarly unto the Christian religion, but they either deny it or horribly deprave it. Many things concerning God and his essential properties -- as his immutability, immensity, prescience -- they have greatly perverted. So is that fulfilled in them which was spoken by Jude the apostle, verse 10.

They "speak evil of those things which they know not: and what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." So they do in the things mentioned, whereof there are natural notions in the minds of men; but of evangelical truths -- which they know not -- they speak evil, and deride them. The holy Trinity they blaspheme -- the incarnation of the Son of God they scorn -- the work of his mediation in his oblation and intercession, with the satisfaction and merit of his obedience and suffering, they reject.

So do they [reject] whatever we are taught of the depravation of our natures by the fall, of the renovation of them by the Holy Ghost; and unto all other articles of our faith do they offer violence, to corrupt them. The beginning of their transgression or apostasy, is in a disbelief of the divine person of Christ. That being rejected, all other sacred truths are removed from their basis and centre, [from] that which gives them their unity and harmony. Hereon they fluctuate up and down in the minds of men, and, appearing unto them under various deceiving colours, are easily misapprehended or disbelieved.

Yea, there can no direct, proper representation be made of them unto the understandings of men. Dissolve the knot, centre, and harmony in the most beautiful composition or structure -- and every part will contribute as much unto the deformity and ruin of the whole, as it did before unto its beauty and consistency. So is it with every doctrine -- so is it with the whole system of evangelical truths. Take the person of Christ out of them, dissolve their harmony in relation thereunto -- whereby we no longer hold the Head in the faith and profession of them -- and the minds of men cannot deliver them from an irreconcilable difference among themselves.

Hereon some of them are immediately rejected, and some of them corrupted; for they lose their native light and beauty. They will neither agree nor consist any where but in Christ. Hence it is that no instance can be given of any, who, from the original of the Christian religion, rejected the divine person of Christ,

and preserved any one evangelical truth besides, pure and uncorrupted. And I do freely confess, that all which we believe concerning the holy Trinity, the eternal counsels of God, the efficacy of the mediation of Christ, his satisfaction and merit, the way which we own of the sanctification, justification, and salvation of the church -- are to be esteemed fables, as the Socinians contend, if what we believe concerning the person of Christ be so also.

2. Hence it is that the knowledge and profession of the truth, with many, is so fruitless, inefficacious, and useless. It is not known, it is not understood nor believed -- in its relation unto Christ; on which account alone it conveys either light or power to the soul. Men profess they know the truth; but they know it not in its proper order, in its harmony and use. It leads them not to Christ, it brings not Christ unto them; and so is lifeless and useless. Hence, oftentimes, none are more estranged from the life of God than such as have much notional knowledge of the doctrines of the Scripture. For they are all of them useless, and subject to be abused, if they are not improved to form Christ in the soul, and transform the whole person into his likeness and image. This they will not effect where their relation unto him is not understood -- where they are not received and learned as a revelation of him, with the mystery of the will and wisdom of God in him. For whereas he is our life, and in our living unto God we do not so much live as he liveth in us, and the life which we lead in the flesh is by the faith of him -- so that we have neither principle nor power of spiritual life, but in, by, and from him -- whatever knowledge we have of the truth, if it do not effect a union between him and our souls, it will be lifeless in us, and unprofitable unto us. It is learning the truth as it is in Jesus, which alone reneweth the image of God in us: Eph. iv. 21-24. Where it is otherwise -- where men have notions of evangelical truths, but know not Christ in them -- whatever they profess, when they come really to examine themselves, they will find them of no use unto them, but that all things between God and their souls are stated on natural light and common presumptions.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-owen/the-person-of-christ-the-great-repository-of-sacred-truth/>

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