

The Essence  
and  
Substance  
Of  
Christian  
Worship

# I. The Essence of Worship

## a. The Idea of Worship

Today we are going to consider the Biblical doctrine of worship. Thomas Manton references a story in which the Roman Senate, hearing of the miracles being performed in Judea, debated on whether to decree divine worship to Christ; but Emperor Tiberius blocked it when he heard that he would be worshipped alone. This is the controversy between Christ and the world. The Christian religion doesn't interfere with any man's liberty but leaves every man's conscience free and accountable only to God; and yet it has no tolerance for false doctrine and does not make a compact or truce with error. It does not claim to be one form of truth which exists side by side with a dozen others, but it reveals Christ as "the way, the truth and the life." We do not believe in many ways to heaven, for we know that there is only one way, as Jesus said, "no man comes to the Father but by Me." And we do not acknowledge two foundations for faith, for we know Christ to be the one and only foundation, and we cannot say otherwise. Christ is not one among many Saviors, he is the one and only Redeemer of men. (Spurgeon comments on Thomas Manton)

The first use of the word 'worship' in the Bible appears in the story of Genesis 22, in which Abraham is commanded to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. "And Abraham said unto his young men, abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen 22:5). Abraham's remarkable statement here indicates all the elements of true worship – knowledge/belief of the gospel, fear of God and love of God. "The lad and I will go and worship!" Abraham knew that God had commanded him to sacrifice the lad, the son of the promise of the gospel, Isaac, but "accounting that God was able to raise him up" (Heb 11:19) Abraham asserts his belief that the lad will come back with him alive and well. He is cheerful and willing to give over even his own beloved son because of His knowledge of God, his trust in the word of God, that Isaac was indeed the son of promise. His fear and love of God are obvious in his willing and cheerful obedience. "We will go and worship."

My goal is to try to open up the specific nature of Biblical worship throughout the study, to see the true foundation of Biblical worship so that we can see more clearly how we should each individually think about worship and how we are to engage in it.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:21-24)

The right exercise of worship is founded on, and rises from, the spirituality of God. The first ground of the worship we render to God, is the infinite excellency of his nature, which is not only one attribute, but results from all his attributes. It is to worship God, as God, as he is the object of worship. The notion of God does not consist in thinking him to be wise, good, just, etc., as accidental properties, but all those understood infinitely beyond any conception and joined into a simple, incomprehensible glory. It follows here that God is an object infinitely to be revered and loved. His forgiveness is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as a motive of our worship. Psalm 130:4, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared." Fear of God, in the Scriptures, signifies the, "whole worship of God," (Acts 10:35).

Now, it is impossible to honor God as we ought, unless we know him as he is; and we could not know him as he is, without divine revelation from himself. No one but God can acquaint us with his own nature. (Charnock)

"Ye worship what ye know not because, unless there be knowledge, it is not God that we worship, but a phantom or idol. All good intentions, as they are called, are struck [down] by this sentence, as [if] by a thunderbolt; for we learn from it, that men can do nothing but [go astray] when they are guided by their own opinion without the word or command of God." (Calvin, commentary on John 4:22)

It is, therefore, as much every man's duty to worship God in spirit, as it is their duty to worship him. Worship is so due to him as God, as that he that denies it disowns his deity; and spiritual worship is so due, that he that waives it denies his

spirituality. It is a debt of justice we owe to God, to worship him; and it is as much a debt of justice to worship him according to his nature. Worship is nothing else but a rendering to God the honor that is due to him; that is, grounded both on his nature and on his command; only that which is on his command is perpetually due. A rational nature must worship God with that in which the glory of God most sparkles in him. We must give him our bodies, but a “living sacrifice.” If the spirit is absent from God when the body is before him, we present a dead sacrifice; it is morally dead in the duty, though it is naturally alive in the posture and action.

As the Divine nature is the object of worship, so the Divine perfections are to be honored in worship; we do not honor God if we do not honor him as he is. We do not honor him as a Spirit, if we do not think him worthy of the ardors and ravishing admirations of our spirits. If we think the devotions of the body are sufficient for him, we contract him into the lower condition of our own being, and not only deny him to be a spiritual nature, but [trample down] all those perfections which he could not possess were he not a Spirit. (“A Christian’s True Spiritual Worship to Jesus Christ” by Stephen Charnock)

## **b. The Foundation of Biblical Worship**

The question of knowing what we worship causes us to begin with the revelation of God. And it is important to understand the nature of that revelation correctly in order to properly appreciate it and to handle it.

### **i. The Revelation of God**

#### **1. Creation**

Theologians normally divide the revelation of God into general and special revelation. General revelation is the “heavens declaring the glory of God” such that all men certainly know about the “eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20) of the Creator. This knowledge certainly is a basis of condemnation since by it men know that there is a God and experience the goodness and kindness of the Creator in that the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike (Matthew 5:45). But the knowledge of God through the creation is marred by the fall, as a cracked window no longer accurately transmits the image from the other side, so the way of clear and distinct knowledge of God through the creation is blocked.

The Confession here reads, The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus quotes Isaiah, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9) so from this we learn that (a) it is possible to worship God in vain; (b) replacing the Word of God with the teachings of mere men leads to vain worship. Thus, we must be extremely careful in our worship to base everything on the Word of God.

#### **2. Scriptures**

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (2 Timothy 3:16)

##### **a. God-breathed**

When we read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” we must not take the word ‘*inspiration*’ to be comparable to the so-called inspiration of a poem, a painting or a piece of music – as we might say, “that was an inspired performance” – because it moves us emotionally or because we perceive some excellence in it. In that idea of *inspiration*, we envision some divine influence flowing into an otherwise human work. But on the contrary,

the Greek word in 2 Timothy 3:16 is θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*), meaning “God-breathed-out” or “God exhaled.” By this, we understand that the Scriptures are the very words of God, breathed-out and written down precisely as God intended. Of course, men wrote the Bible but every single word in the original was God-breathed-out and therefore altogether the production of God. This is the lofty claim that Scripture makes for itself. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). David said, “the Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). “And he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began” (Luke 1:70). God “spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb 1:1) and “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:2).

The Lord Jesus said, “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail” (Luke 16:17) and “heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” (Luke 21:33). For “the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:8). Jesus said, “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35) and “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27) because “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). And Jesus said, “thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7). “For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth” (Psalm 33:4). “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Scripture is “the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). “All thy commandments are truth” (Psalm 119:151). “Thy testimonies are very sure” (Psalm 93:5). “Thy word is true from the beginning” (Psalm 119:160). “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psalms 12:6).

Consistent with the teaching of Scripture regarding itself as being God-breathed and altogether true is the Biblical teaching that God is a God of truth and knowledge. He is “a God of truth and without iniquity” (Deuteronomy 32:4). “The LORD is a God of knowledge” (1 Samuel 2:3), and “there is no searching of his understanding” (Isaiah 40:28), because “his understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5). He is the “LORD God of truth” (Psalm 31:5), “the God of truth” (Isaiah 65:16), “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17,15:26,16:13). “The Spirit is truth” (1 John 5:6) and Jesus said, “I am ... the truth” (John 14:6). “The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness” (Jeremiah 4:2). He is “the King of heaven, all whose works are truth” (Daniel 4:37). “Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37:16) “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent” (1 Samuel 15:29) and “God ... cannot lie” (Titus 1:2).

Now, we should not accept the authority and truth of a collection of writings merely because they claim to be the very words of the God of truth. “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Proverbs 14:15). Therefore, in addition to the self-testimony of Scripture, we are moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the holy Scriptures. The church has not defined the Scriptures but has received them from God through men who were undeniably attested in their time as being ordained by God. For “the LORD said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book” (Exodus 17:14). And “thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book” (Jer 30:2). And to Habakkuk, “write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Hab 2:2). And to John, “what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia” (Rev 1:11).

Furthermore, when we consider the agreement of all the parts of the Bible, the consistency of the doctrine taught throughout, the written prophecy and precise fulfillment separated by hundreds and even thousands of years and the vast network of cross-references linking works written centuries apart, we realize that the Bible is unlike any other collection of writings known to man.

The Bible says that “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num 23:19) and “I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My

counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). This is the only viable explanation for fulfilled prophecy, “now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet” (Matt 1:22), “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet” (Matt 4:14), “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet” (Matt 13:35) and “all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled” (Matt 26:56). “And the scripture was fulfilled” (Mark 15:28) and “these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22) and “this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law” (John 15:25). “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled” (John 19:36).

And still further, when we recognize the heavenliness of the material, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, we are compelled to the full persuasion of the absolute truthfulness and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Still, while one cannot reasonably deny that the Scripture is the very Word of God; nevertheless, our full persuasion and assurance of its truthfulness and divine authority is not from those reasons arrived at through our own understanding but must come from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, who bears witness by and with the words of God in our hearts: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

To be clear, the innate authority of the Bible does not depend on our persuasion of its authority, nor upon the testimony of any man or church. Rather, the Scriptures are authoritative because they are the actual God-breathed words of the sovereign God of truth, who declares “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10).

Thus, we have come to an initial realization of our entire dependence on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit for our understanding of God. Thus, we find ourselves humbled from the beginning! We must be extremely careful to handle the Word of God with great humility. As the LORD said, “to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). So let us tremble before every Biblical text and seek out the whole counsel of God and humbly ask the Holy Spirit to grant us understanding of the Scriptures through the proper methods of interpretation in the light of the whole of Scripture so that we may worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

## **ii. The Nature of God – the full Biblical Revelation**

### **1. The Unity and Simplicity of God**

#### **a. God is Spirit, God is Light, God is Good, God is Truth, God is Love**

#### **b. God is Essentially Unknowable**

- God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: (Exodus 3:14)
- Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. (Job 36:26)
- the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy (Is 57:15a)
- dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see (1 Timothy 6:16)
- God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)
- God is love (1 John 4:8)

The mystery of God’s nature is signified by the name God gives himself: Exod. 3:14, ‘I am that I am.’ That is, God is a simple, pure, uncompounded being, without any created mixture; as infinitely above the being of creatures as above the conceptions of creatures: Job 37:23, ‘Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out.’ God is glorious in holiness and His holiness is that which angels adore, Isa. 6:3.

God’s holiness is incomprehensible because of its simplicity. The idea of simplicity is what is taught in the Confession as being “without parts.” We might suppose that something simple must be easy to comprehend. And in the case of relative simplicity that is true. A jigsaw puzzle with 20 pieces is much simpler to figure out

than one with 2000 pieces. If we wanted to understand the nature of the automobile, we could proceed by breaking it down and analyzing it in terms of its constituent parts. We know that cars have engines, tires, seats, windshield, etc. and by understanding each of those parts and their subparts and how they fit together into the composite nature of the car, we can understand the idea of the car. But in the case of absolute simplicity, we are left dumbfounded. With God there are no parts – there is nothing in God which is not altogether God. God is not composed of knowledge and goodness and love but each of those things encompasses the others. And just as God’s holiness is the unity and consummate glory of His nature as infinite, morally pure, active and intelligent Spirit – so God’s knowledge is essential, God’s goodness is essential, God’s love is essential such that we can say “God is light”, “God is good”, “God is love”. All that God is, is one in God. God’s essence and His existence are one and simple.

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. (Isaiah 40:25) To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (Isaiah 46:5)

John Owen wrote, “Now, if God were of any causes, internal or external, any principles antecedent or superior to him, he could not be so absolutely first and independent. Were he composed of parts, accidents, manner of being, he could not be first; for all these are before that which is of them, and therefore his essence is absolutely simple. [...] The attributes of God, which alone seem to be distinct things in the essence of God, are all of them essentially the same with one another, and every one the same with the essence of God itself. For, first, they are spoken one of another as well as of God; as there is his ‘eternal power’ as well as his ‘Godhead.’” (John Owen, *The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated*, Vol 12)

We worship God because God is the Most High – infinitely glorious – utterly beyond our finite comprehension. Only by the self-revelation of the infinitely glorious and incomprehensible God are we permitted to know Him at all and so to worship Him properly. That revelation has been progressive over time but has now been given its most fulsome expression in the gospel, in which a fulsome revelation of the Trinity of God has been made known and by which sinners are not only reconciled to God but are brought into the very condition and state by that revelation to be made capable of worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth.

## **2. The Three Persons**

Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! (Psalm 113:5-6).

We should ask ourselves why it would be that such an independent, eternally blessed, and glorious God would stoop to behold things that are in heaven and on the earth. Why would God create anything? To quote Jonathan Edwards, “the external glory of God consists in the communication of [His attributes]. The communication of his knowledge is chiefly in giving the knowledge of himself: for this is the knowledge in which the fulness of God’s understanding chiefly consists. And thus we see how the manifestation of God’s glory to created understandings, and their seeing and knowing it, is not distinct from an emanation or communication of God’s fulness, but clearly implied in it. Again, the communication of God’s virtue or holiness, is principally in communicating the love of himself. And thus we see how, not only the creature’s seeing and knowing God’s excellence, but also supremely esteeming and loving him, belongs to the communication of God’s fulness. And the communication of God’s joy and happiness, consists chiefly in communicating to the creature that happiness and joy which consists in rejoicing in God, and in his glorious excellency; for in such joy God’s own happiness does principally consist. And in these things, knowing God’s excellency, loving God for it, and rejoicing in it, and in the exercise and expression of these, consists God’s honour and praise; so that these are clearly implied in that glory of God, which consists in the emanation of his internal glory. (Edwards, *The End for which God Created the World*)

### **a. Personal distinctions**

- i. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are Persons within the Triune Godhead**
- ii. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father**
- iii. The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son**

Jesus sets forth the distinction of Persons

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; (John 14:16)

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

Jesus is eternally begotten of the Father, proceeds from the Father, and is the express image of His person (Heb 1:3). Therefore the Son is the only possible revealer of Him

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18)

I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father. (John 16:28)

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matthew 11:27)

The Spirit is the Spirit of Father and Son and proceeds from the Father and the Son

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: (John 15:26)

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (John 16:7)

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (Romans 8:9)

## **b. Interpersonal Relations**

### **i. Knowledge**

This is the heart of what I want to show you today – the very heart of the Godhead itself and how the interpersonal relations are the true foundation for our worship. Our worship of God cannot be in accordance with any imaginations of our own minds but must be a participation in the personal self-glorification of God, through union with Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matthew 11:27)

The idea of self-knowledge is problematic, as you might attest if you engage in introspection and seek to know the thing that is doing the knowing. It is like your eye trying to see itself without using a mirror. And, as anyone who is married might attest, oftentimes our spouse can see things in us that we do not see. Jesus said, “why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Matt 7:3) because it is much easier to see flaws in others that we do not see in ourselves.

But here the Lord says that He knows the Father and the Father knows Him. An infinite, eternal Person cannot be known except by another infinite, eternal Person. But the infinite, eternal Person of the Father fully knows the infinite, eternal

Person of Son. There is no obstacle to their mutual knowledge. And the Son is the exact representation of the Father. So, the Father knows Himself in the Son and the Son knows Himself in the Father.

And in the Trinity, there is also the witness of the Holy Spirit. Thus, there are two witnesses for each Person, as Scripture calls for “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor 13:1). Paul wrote, “even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:11). Here the full knowledge of God to the uttermost is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He searches all things and has exact, exhaustive and personal knowledge of the Father and the Son, being Himself the Spirit of each.

## ii. Reverence

One of the most overlooked characteristics of the Persons of the Trinity is their reverence for each other. We read this prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 11,

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,  
and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The Spirit of the LORD shall 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.  
(Isaiah 11:1-2)

It is rather amazing to read of the character of the Son of God in terms of the Spirit of God being the Spirit of the fear of the LORD. The idea of verse 3 is that He delights in the fear of the Lord. The Hebrew is a verbal form based on the noun of a delightful odor and indicates a pleasurable and all-consuming delight. His delight is in the fear of the LORD! Why? Because the fear of the LORD is the root and ground of all those others. “And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments” (Psalm 111:10).

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,  
I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.  
(Psalm 40:7-8)

Hebrews 10:7-9 refers these verses to the Son – and the Son not only delights to do the will of the Father, His law is said to be written within His heart, and this is an expression of the fear of the Lord. And Jesus said, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29) and this is an expression of the full and perfect fear of God in Christ.

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life (Proverbs 14:27)  
the fear of the LORD is his treasure (Isaiah 33:6)

In each of these cases, the fear of the Lord is equated with God Himself. Christ is the fountain of life! Christ is the treasure! But here these blessings are wholly expressed in terms of the fear of God. It is true then to say that Christ is the fear of God – as we read in Genesis 31:42, “Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac.” He is that Holy One, named the Fear of Isaac, He is the Fear of God perfectly expressed in perfect reverence and obedience. Alex Motyer comments, “To fear him with a true fear is not a human emotion worked up but a gift he has in store for those he delights to bless.” You may never have thought of the fear of God as a gift given to bless! But if God is the Fear of God, then the Fear of God must be the greatest blessing that one could pray for. :)

Likewise, the Father reverences the Son, saying

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God,  
hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.  
(Psalm 45:6-7)

This is applied to the Son in Hebrews 1:8

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

The context makes it clear that it is the Father speaking, referring to the Son as “O God” which is obviously a term of utmost reverence. And in the High Priestly prayer recorded in John 17

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. (John 17:5)

And, Mark just preached through this verse,

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:  
That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.  
(John 5:22-23)

Here is the Father glorifying the Son to the highest possible degree. No one can be honored or revered more than what the Lord is here claiming.

And just a brief mention of this idea,

Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men:  
but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.  
(Matthew 12:31)

There is another idea here that often goes unnoticed because people are so focused on the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit to notice what reverence and honor is given to Him by the Father and the Son. The Father and Son are willing to forgive all manner of blasphemy against themselves but here defend and honor the glorious and blessed Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

### **iii. Love**

This final aspect of the relationships among the Persons of the Trinity is more normally considered as part of the relations among the Persons of the Trinity. We have “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand” (John 3:35), “the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does” (John 5:20), “You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

The Son loves the Father: “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do” (John 14:31). In this verse, we see that the obedience of the Son to the Father arises from both fear and love.

In general, it is not hard to understand that each of the Persons of the Trinity would be enraptured by the other Persons. Do they not perfectly express the law to love your neighbor as you love yourself? Each Person is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in Being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. There is perfect love among the Persons because each is love for all the things that the others express in highest perfection.

### 3. The Incomprehensible Glory of God

#### a. The Highest good

- i. Transcendence of God – Immanence of God
- ii. Incommunicable attributes – Communicable attributes

Let it be observed here that the Biblical revelation of God is beyond our ability to comprehend. God is One and Simple and utterly transcendent. He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy – an incomprehensibly glorious God. And this One exists in Three Persons in such a way that God is altogether self-glorifying with perfect humility. There is perfect knowledge, perfect reverence and perfect love expressed in a way which cannot be exceeded.

#### b. To Glorify the Highest Good

- i. God must glorify the highest good
- ii. God cannot glorify a lesser good
- iii. God must glorify Himself
  1. God does not share His glory with another
  2. God glorifies Himself gloriously

I am the LORD; that is my name!  
I will not give my glory to anyone else  
(Isaiah 42:8)

The communication of his knowledge is chiefly in giving the knowledge of himself: for this is the knowledge in which the fulness of God's understanding chiefly consists. And thus we see how the manifestation of God's glory to created minds, and their seeing and knowing it, is the fulfillment of the purpose of the glory of God. The communication of God's virtue or holiness is in communicating Himself, in and through Himself. And thus we see how, not only the creature's seeing and knowing God's excellence, but also supremely esteeming and loving him, belongs to the communication of God's fulness. And the communication of God's joy and happiness, consists chiefly in communicating to the creature that happiness and joy which consists in rejoicing in God, and in his glorious excellency; for in such joy is God's own joy in which He rejoices eternally in Himself. And in these things, knowing God's excellency, loving God and fearing Him for it, and rejoicing in it, and in the exercise and expression of these, is the substance of God's honor and praise; so that these are clearly implied in that glory of God, which consists in the emanation of his internal glory, among the Persons of the Godhead is opened up to sinners, to the everlasting praise of His glorious grace.

In Summary, then

- iii. God's glorification of Himself in Creation and Redemption in His primary purpose for Creation and Redemption
  1. God glorifies Himself by revealing Himself
  2. God reveals Himself in creation
  3. God reveals Himself in redemption
    - a. The Father glorifies the Son that the Son may glorify the Father
    - b. The Holy Spirit glorifies the Son
    - c. The Father and Son glorify the Holy Spirit

## II. The Substance of Worship

Now, based on the preceding view of the inner glory of the Trinity, there are three aspects to which we must pay attention in worship. The first is light and knowledge. It is the first foundation because we can only rightly worship what we know, as Jesus said in John 4. We must worship in truth. Faith cometh by hearing. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and God is a God of knowledge. We need to know the gospel because in the gospel is the full revelation of God. And God is glorified in the revelation of Himself. So, if we are to worship Him, we must first of all worship Him in truth.

Second, we must worship Him in fear. The fear of God is a right reaction to the knowledge of God. If you have no fear of God, then you are unregenerate (Romans 3:18). The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever (Psalm 19:9). The fear of the LORD tendeth to life (Proverbs 16:6). The fear of the LORD is His delight (Isaiah 11:3). Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD and depart from evil (Proverbs 3:7). Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28).

Third, we must worship Him in love. Truly we love because He first loved us and because the Holy Spirit has poured forth the love of God into our hearts. Surely we must love Him if we are to worship Him rightly – but this love is not an emotion but a wholehearted dedication and commitment and giving of oneself over to the Beloved. This love must be tempered by knowledge and fear – must first be known by Him as a son before we can come to Him in love and be welcomed onto His lap to hear our prayers.

- a. God's Glorification of Himself in the Worship of God
  - i. We worship the marvelous, incomprehensibly glorious Triune God
  - ii. We worship the Father of Lights, exalted in glory beyond all comprehension
    1. In ourselves we cannot worship the Father
      - a. Unregenerate person does not know Him
        - i. who suppress the truth in unrighteousness Romans 1:18
        - ii. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (Eph 4:18)
      - b. Unregenerate person does not love Him
        - i. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you (John 5:42)
        - ii. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: (Romans 8:7)
        - iii. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 Jn 2:15)
      - c. Unregenerate person does not fear Him
        - i. The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. (Psalm 36:1)
        - ii. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil. (Prov 16:6)
    2. We need a Mediator, to be reconciled with God
      - a. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. (Job 9:33)
      - b. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)
    3. We need a personal interest in the Mediator
      - a. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15)
      - b. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (Col 1:21)
  - iii. In Christ as Mediator
    1. Gives knowledge of the Father, 2 Cor 4:6
    2. Knowledge of ourselves, Romans 7:15f

3. Reconciles us to God, Romans 5:10
  4. Removal of guilt, Romans 3:26
  5. Imputation of righteousness, Phil 3:9
  6. Adoption and access to the Father, John 1:12-13, Romans 5:1
  7. He is made to us knowledge, righteousness, wisdom, and love (1 Cor 1:31)
- iv. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit
1. Implants Christ in us, it is the Spirit who gives life, and that life is in His Son,
    - a. having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23)
  2. Gives understanding of His Word, John 16:13
    - a. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak
  3. Instills godly fear, Psalm 23
    - a. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake
  4. Pours love into our hearts, Romans 5:5
    - a. the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us
- b. Three Aspects of Worship in Terms of Holiness and Humility

Now, I want to mention the ideas of holiness and humility as they relate to worship. It seems to me that they can be viewed as opposite sides of the same coin, let that coin be called "godliness." Holiness, when considered in itself, has the idea of separation from all impurity. We might not be able to define what white is but we sure are able to detect a stain on it. Humility has the sense of lowering and emptying of oneself as right and proper before the infinitely holy God. We humble ourselves before the Holy One in knowledge, fear and love by receiving His truth, His fear and His love as our own because we have none of these things in ourselves.

#### **i. Knowledge of God**

- 1. Holiness separates from all false doctrine**
- 2. Humility learns of God only**

Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things  
I consider to be right;  
I hate every false way.  
(Psalm 119:128)

#### **ii. Fear of God**

- 1. Holiness separates from all fear of man**
- 2. Humility fears God only**

The fear of man brings a snare,  
But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.  
(Prov 29:25)

#### **iii. Love of God**

- 1. Holiness separates from love of world, flesh and devil**
- 2. Humility loves God only**

We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19) because of His great love with which He loved us (Eph 2:4). We do not love the world or the things of the world. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me -- yet they will by no means follow a stranger. We know Him who gave His life for the sheep and we love Him and follow Him and will not follow a stranger. We love Him with the love by which He humbled Himself, as Christ is the perfect humility of

God, who humbled Himself to the death of the cross to redeem His lost sheep. Our humility is grounded in His humility and our love flows from His love and humility.

### **c. Instruments of Worship**

#### **i. Public Reading and Preaching of the Word**

The fundamental importance of knowing God and understanding the gospel is the very heart of God's glory. God is glorified by the revelation of Himself. God's glory is most accomplished in the reading and preaching of Scripture. God is the ultimate good and the fulsome revelation of the Triune God in the gospel is the way in which God glorifies Himself in worship.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:13)

give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. (1 Timothy 4:13)

As we give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, we grow in knowledge of God, of the truth of the gospel – and, if we are hearing rightly, that ought to generate in us both godly fear and godly love.

As Jesus said, “take heed therefore how ye hear : for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” (Luke 8:18)

- Some people hardly listen at all (Is 40:21)
- Some people listen merely to be entertained (Ezek 33:31,32)
- Some listen to find fault (Mark 12:13; Luke 11:54)
- Some listen to obtain true wisdom and put it into practice (Acts 17:10)

The proper hearing of the Word of God is worship – it is worship in the Spirit and in truth – and if the Spirit and the Word of truth are joined together in your heart/mind in belief in the gospel, then godly fear and godly love will be formed within your heart, and that is true worship.

#### **ii. Prayer**

Prayer is the entrance into the presence of God. For prayer to be an act of worship, it must be entered into with the utmost seriousness and engaged with knowledge, with fear and with love. One does not enter into the presence of the thrice holy, Most High God with a frivolous attitude or with a sense of familiarity. A knowledge of Scripture includes a recollection of Nadab and Abihu, and other instances where men approached the thrice Holy God

This is it that the LORD spake, saying,  
I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me,  
and before all the people I will be glorified  
(Lev 10:3)

We must understand that prayer is the consummation of all the types and shadows of the Old Testament in which a priest would enter into the Holy of Holies. He was only permitted to go once per year and would go with great fear lest he be struck down before the Lord. Well, we are doing the same thing when we come to God in prayer. We have such a privilege that we can scarce express it – we are coming to the Father of Lights and appearing before His throne. We must be careful how we come.

In this, we must enter in through the Person of the Mediator. We come to the Father as His children, adopted in Christ, and accepted in the Beloved. We come through His perfect righteousness imputed to us and we appear in His beauty which clothes us in perfect white. We come through the moving of the Holy Spirit, who works in us and intercedes in prayer for us. And thus clothed and enabled, we come in the knowledge of God's incomprehensible perfection of glory and in fear and love.

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?  
But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.  
I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.  
(Psalm 130:3-5)

When we pray, we seek to enter into God's perspective. As we read in Psalm 73,

When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;  
Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.  
(Psalm 73:16-17)

This is the change that was wrought in the heart of the psalmist through prayer. He entered into the sanctuary and came to the awareness of the perspective that comes through knowledge of the Holy One, and fear and love of Him. His ways are everlasting and man's life is but a breath.

We ought to go to God in prayer to glorify Him with praise and honor first and foremost. Not that He receives glory from men but it is our true and proper position before Him in all humility. And we ought to be thankful in all humility for the things which we all take so much for granted. We ought to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness -- For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom 11:36).

### **iii. Communion**