

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH



DOCTRINES OF GRACE THOMAS JACOMB

GOD MANIFEST
IN THE FLESH

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

Thomas Jacomb

‘For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh’ (*Romans 8:3*)

GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST PUBLICATIONS

GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST PUBLICATIONS
12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3BZ, UK

2008

ISBN 13 : 978-1-897837-86-3

Printed by:
Cpod
Newbury House, Aintree Avenue
White Horse Business Park
TROWBRIDGE
Wiltshire, BA14 0XB

Preface

Christ is the essence, the foundation of the Christian religion. In Matthew chapter 16 we read: ‘He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’

This booklet gives the scriptural delineation of the person of Christ, the Son of God. The content has been extracted from the sermons preached and revised for publication by Thomas Jacomb (1622-1687) on the first four verses of the eighth chapter of the epistle of Paul to the Romans. The book was reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1996. The part of the text covered by this booklet is: ‘God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.’ The extracts are from chapters 10, 11 and 12 in

Jacomb's book and these correspond with Sections 1, 2 and 3 in this booklet. Chapter 10 establishes scripturally the sending of Christ into this world by the Father. Chapter 11 shows that he who was sent was God's only begotten Son. And Chapter 12 expounds that God's own Son came, as a real man, in the likeness of sinful flesh.

The sermons were preached some time after 1662 in the persecuting times when Jacomb was ejected from the Church of England along with many other good ministers. Heretical teaching which denied the Godhead of Christ, labelled Socinianism from the name of its founder, was rampant in Europe and influential in the British Isles particularly through the works of John Biddle, the father of English Unitarianism. Of course we know from the Bible and particularly from the epistles of the apostle John that this denial of Christ's divinity dates back to apostolic times. It continues unabated to the present day. John Owen and other Puritans refuted in great depth the purveyors of this heresy in Britain.

Why then did Jacomb add his contribution to this defence of truth? He explains in his preface that he considered Socinianism attacked the 'very vitals' of the faith; it endangered 'the very heart of Christianity.' 'Can we say or do too much to secure souls from it, and to defend the gospel against it?' 'I hope I have—I am sure it hath been my endeavour—made some things, in themselves dark and intricate, to be somewhat more plain and intelligible to weaker capacities; and if I have done but that, though I have brought no new matter, my pains have not been ill-spent. My soul's desire is that the professors of this age may be well-grounded in the articles of the Christian faith, and

that they may attain to a clearer insight into gospel mysteries than what as yet they have attained to.’

He was also concerned to apply the doctrine to the lives of believers. But this little booklet is confined to his doctrinal exposition of the text, in which he not only exposes the Socinian errors but other leading heresies on the person of Christ, including the denial that Christ was truly man in having a human body and human soul. Mr J H Gosden, in the 1951 Gospel Standard, included the section of the work on Christ’s humanity, and it was this that brought the book to our attention. Even in the section he extracted, Mr Gosden had to cut out much content because of the constraints of magazine publishing. We have omitted the Hebrew, Greek and Latin phrases and the work has been broken up into subtitled sections to make it easier to read, similar to our first book in this doctrinal series—John Gill on Justification. Publisher inserts are italicised in square brackets. Most of these are meanings of obscure words.

But though, with Mr Gosden, we have focused on the doctrinal element and have excluded the applications, or *uses*, appended by the author we concur with Jacomb’s concern that the doctrine—not speculative but wholly scriptural—must be received under the anointings of the Holy Spirit. In one place he gives this warning when we in reverence contemplate the mystery of God manifest in the flesh:

‘Be sure you keep within the bounds of sobriety. I mean this, take heed that in this deep mystery you ‘be not wise above what is written,’ 1 Cor. 4:6; that you do not therein consult your own purblind and carnal reason, but scripture revelation altogether ... do not pry too far into those secrets which God hath locked up

from you; content yourselves with what he hath revealed in his word, and stay there. It is both sinful and also dangerous for poor shallow creatures to venture too far into these depths, where, if they once lose their bottom, the written word, they drown themselves presently; there is no clue but that to guide us in this labyrinth. That Christ is the Son of God is very clear; that he is the Son of God by eternal generation is very clear; but will you be inquisitive further to know what this generation is? What can your reason, the scripture being silent about it, say of that? Oh go not too far there! Human reason, considered as merely natural, is a very incompetent judge of this divine and sublime mystery; a mystery to be adored by faith, not to be comprehended by reason.'

And then again:

'He studies this mystery, and all others, best, who studies it most upon his knees. This special and supernatural Sonship of Christ is not savingly to be known without special and supernatural illumination from Christ through the Spirit. It is observable that in Matt. 16:17, when Peter had made that good confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' see what Christ resolved it into: 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' You know that passage, Matt. 11:27, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son,' or makes others to know him, 'but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' These two persons do make known each the other; the Father reveals the Son, and the Son reveals the Father. The Son is a fit person to reveal the Father, for he is

his only-begotten Son, and lies in his bosom; therefore he saith, John 1:18, ‘No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.’ And the Father is also a fit person to reveal the Son; for he having begotten him, and having had him with himself from everlasting, he knows him exactly. Oh, therefore, go to him by prayer, and beseech him to reveal his Son to you! It is a great thing to know Christ in this relation—so great that there must be a heavenly light, a spiritual understanding given to a man before he can come up to it. Mark that of the apostle, 1 John 5:20, ‘And hath given us understanding that we may know him that is true.’ He speaks of the knowing of Christ as the true Son of God. It is as if the apostle had said, if God had not illuminated our understandings, and irradiated them with a divine light, we had never known Christ savingly in this notion. He who begat the Son of himself from all eternity, to him it appertains by his Spirit in time savingly to reveal this Son to the creature.’

But as he expands in many places, this doctrine, savingly received, of the person of Christ is the rock of our salvation, the glory of the worship of saints on earth and in heaven, the way of access for a guilty sinner to a holy God, our strength and comfort as we pass through this present evil world, the assurance of victory over Satan and all his powers, the joy of the believer’s heart, the glory of God. Jehovah Jesus, ‘My Lord and my God.’

Timothy Abbott
Committee member
Gospel Standard Trust Committee

Contents

‘God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.’ *Romans 8:3 (part)*. There are three great doctrinal truths here to be handled:

1. That Christ was sent, and sent by God the Father. *page 13*
2. That Christ, thus sent, was God’s own Son. *page 38*
3. That Christ, God’s own Son, was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. *page 88*

1

Christ sent by the Father

Here are two things to be spoken to, Christ's being sent, and his being sent by the Father, but they may very well be put together. Before I fall upon the close handling of this sending of Christ, there are three things which it presents in our consideration: his pre-existence, his personality, his personal distinction from the Father. Let me therefore a little touch upon each of these.

Christ's pre-existence

1. This sending of Christ strongly implies his pre-existence before his incarnation. For if he had not had a being before, how could the Father send him? That which is not cannot be sent. It is not said here that God now created him or made him, as if he did not exist before, but he sent him, which must, as I said, strongly imply that he did exist before this sending. This the Socinians fiercely oppose and therefore in this matter they are worse than the Arians. For these, though they denied that Christ was from all eternity, and made him to be only first created by God, upon

the misunderstanding and perverting of his being called ‘the first born of every creature,’ Col. 1:13; the ‘beginning of the creation of God,’ Rev. 3:14; yet they asserted Christ’s existence long before his incarnation. But the Socinians deny that he had any being or existence before he was conceived and brought forth by the virgin Mary; so that their opinion about the person of Christ is somewhat worse than that of the old Arians. The orthodox fully prove the eternity of Christ against the one, and consequently the pre-existence of Christ before his incarnation against the other.

And one would think the scriptures are so clear in this, that there should not be the least controversy about it; for they tell us that Christ was in Jacob’s time: Gen. 48:16, ‘The Angel which redeemed me from all evil,’ etc. It might easily be proved that this angel was Christ; that he was in Job’s time, for he said, Job 19:25, ‘I know that my redeemer liveth,’ meaning Christ. That he was in the prophets’ time under the Old Testament, for the ‘Spirit of Christ was in them,’ 1 Pet. 1:11; that he was in Abraham’s time, yea, long before it: John 8:56, etc., ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am’; that he was in the Israelites’ time, for, 1 Cor. 10:9, it is said, ‘Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted;’ *him* is added in some translations, however the sense will so carry it; that he was in the prophet Isaiah’s time, for, John 12:41, you read, ‘These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him,’ that is, of Christ. Now were not these periods of time before, long before, Christ’s

being born of the virgin? therefore he had an existence before that. How fully and plainly is this asserted in the gospel! John 1:1-3, 10, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.' Eph. 3:9, etc., 'Who created all things by Jesus Christ;' by him, not as an instrument, but as a social or co-ordinate cause. Col. 1:16, 17, 'By him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.' Heb. 1:2, 'By whom also he made the worlds.' Now could Christ have thus co-operated with the Father in the creation, and yet not have a being before his incarnation, which was so long after the creation? John 1:15, 'John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.' How was Christ before John Baptist, if he did then only exist when he was born? for in reference to birth John Baptist was before Christ, he being born before him. John 17:5, 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' Mark the latter words, 'With the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' Phil. 2:6, 'Who being (subsisting, existing,) in the form of God,' etc. John 16:28, 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.' John 6:62, 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was

before?’ in respect of his divine nature, or as he was the Son of God. Do not these scriptures sufficiently evince that Christ had a being before he was incarnate? The drawing forth of their full strength, and the answering of the several cavils and evasions of the adversaries about them, would fill up a volume; the learned know where and by whom both of these are fully done.

This sending of Christ therefore speaks his existence before he assumed flesh; he must have an antecedent being, otherwise he would not have been capable of being sent. And he was first sent, and then incarnate, his mission being antecedent to his incarnation, though this be denied by the enemies with whom we have to do. For God sent him, that is, appointed that he should assume the human nature; and this is his being sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, as a judicious expositor descants upon the words.

Christ's personality

2. Secondly, this sending of Christ speaks his personality. He did not only exist before he took flesh, but he existed as a person; he had his manner of subsistence [*as a divine person*] distinct from the subsistence of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. But this explication of Christ being a person more properly belongs to the next head. Here I say Christ was a person, by which I mean he was not a thing, quality, dispensation, or manifestation, as some fondly and dangerously speak; but he was, and is, a person, having a proper, personal subsistence. And he must be so, or else he could not be the subject of this sending. It is very true, God may be said to send or give that which is but manifestative, as he sends his gospel, which yet is not a person,

but only a manifestation of his will, grace, love, wisdom, etc. But now in Christ there is something more than bare sending, even that which will amount to the proving of him to be nothing less than a person; for he is sent to be incarnate, to take the likeness of sinful flesh upon him. Now a bare quality or manifestation are under an utter incapacity of being thus, or doing thus. Who will be so absurd as to assert such a thing? If Christ be sent by God the Father, and upon that doth assume flesh, then certainly he was a person, for none but a person could do this. Had the apostle only said that God sent Christ, the truth in hand had not been so evident, at leastwise from this text; but when he adds 'he sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh,' this undeniably proves his personality.

The distinction between the Father and Christ

3. Thirdly, it notes the distinction that is between the Father and Christ. This appears not only as one is the Father and the other is the Son, though that evidently infers a distinction, for the same person in the same respects cannot be Father and Son too - cannot beget and be begotten too, but also as the one sends and the other is sent. The Father and the Son are one in nature and essence, with respect to which he saith, John 10:30, 'I and my Father are one;' yet they are distinct persons. The number and distinction of the persons in the Trinity is usually taken notice of by divines from this scripture. The apostle, saith Theophylact, had spoken of the Spirit in the former verse [*Rom. 8:1*]; in this he speaks of the Father and of the Son, teaching the Trinity. And saith Peter Martyr from these words, the number and distinction of the persons in the holy Trinity doth appear. Which great truth

is also frequently held forth in other places: Isa. 48:16, 'Come ye near unto me,' (Christ is the person here speaking) 'hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.' Here is a full Old Testament proof of the distinction of the persons. But it is most plainly held forth in the New Testament. At the baptism of Christ there was a manifestation of God in the Father, Son, and Spirit; the Spirit descended in the form of a dove; the Father gave the testimony, 'This is my beloved Son'; Christ was the object of it. Christ directed his apostles to baptize 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' which surely he would not have done had there not been a personal distinction between them. John 14:16, 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,' etc. Here are all the persons as distinct. John 14:1, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' John 12:44, 'He that believeth on me, believeth not on me' (i.e. on me only,) 'but on him that sent me.' John 5:32, 'There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.' Many such places might be cited, but these may suffice. Here is enough in the text; the same person, considered in the same respects, cannot both send and be sent too; therefore the Father and the Son are distinct persons. True, as Augustine observes, in some sense Christ might be said to send himself, that is, consider him essentially, so he did what the Father did, so he sent himself; but if you consider him personally, so he did not send but was sent: upon which he and his Father are distinct. So much for these three things, which are but implied in Christ's mission.

I come more closely to the thing itself, and to the point which lies before us, namely, that Christ was sent, and sent by God the Father. The redemption of lost man was a blessed work, a most glorious undertaking; never was there any like to it, or to be paralleled with it; yet our Lord Jesus would not of his own head engage in it, or thrust himself upon it; no, he must first be sent; then, and not till then, did he undertake it. And who sent him? Surely he who only had authority to employ and commissionate him about such a work, viz. God the Father: 'God sent his own Son,' etc.; where, as hath been already hinted, God is to be taken in the personal notion, and as relating to the first person.

This sending of Christ, and that by the Father, are two points of such unquestionable verity to all who pass under the denomination of Christians, that as to them it is not necessary to spend the least time in the proving of them. Yet, even as to them, it is needful that these truths should be a little opened and explained. In order to which I will endeavour,

1. To clear up the nature of the act.
2. To remove a difficulty or answer an objection about it.
3. To give the grounds and reasons of it.

To clear up the nature of the act of the Father's sending his Son

As to the first, the question is, What was the Father's sending of Christ? in what respects is he said to be sent, and sent by the Father? for I shall open both together. To which I answer,

1. Negatively, in two things:

(1) This sending of Christ was not his ineffable and eternal generation, or Sonship grounded upon that. He was sent who

was the Son of God; but he was not the Son of God as he was sent, nor said to be sent as he was the Son of God. His Sonship was the result of his generation, not of his mission. These two are very different things; for Christ was begotten of the Father from everlasting; but he was sent by the Father—the sending being taken in its strict and most proper notion—in time: ‘When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son,’ etc., Gal. 4:4. He was a Son long before he was sent; and he was not a Son because he was sent, but he was sent because he was a Son.

(2) Christ’s sending was not any local secession from his Father, or any local motion from the place where he was to some other place where he was not. You must not so conceive of it, nor fetch your measures concerning it from your own sending of persons; for there when you send one upon your errand or business, he leaves the place where he was, and goes to the place where he was not; but so it was not with Christ. The Father sent him to this lower world, yet here he was before; the Father sent him from heaven, yet, as to his Godhead, he remained in heaven still. He saith, indeed, John 16:28, ‘I came forth from the Father’—yet not so but that he was still with the Father—‘and am come into the world’—yet not so but that he was there before; for ‘he was in the world, and the world was made by him,’ John 1:10; ‘again I leave the world and go to the Father,’ he speaks in respect of his bodily presence. Look, as when Christ ascended, he went from earth, and yet he was on earth still as to his spiritual presence; for he saith, ‘Lo, I am with you unto the end of the world,’ Matt. 28:20. As man he went from us, but as God he is as much with us as ever. So when

Christ descended, he came from heaven, and yet he was in heaven still; for he tells us, ‘No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven,’ John 3:13. So that in Christ’s sending there was no mutation of place, only upon that he assumed the human nature, and so became visible; whereas before, as God, he was invisible. He was but where he was, only he was more than what he was, for he was now God-man; and he was here in a different manner, for now he was visible. You see what the sending of Christ was not.

2. Secondly, to open it affirmatively, this sending of Christ lies in five things:

(1) In God’s choosing, appointing, ordaining of Christ from everlasting to the office and work of the mediator. This, I confess, is somewhat remote from that strict notion of his sending in which the scripture usually speaks of it. However, I take it in, it being the foundation of his being sent in time. God the Father from all eternity did choose, decree, ordain that his Son should take flesh, and in that flesh redeem man; therefore he calls him his elect: Isa. 42:1, ‘Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.’ And, Rom. 3:25, it is said, ‘Whom God hath *set forth* to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,’ etc.; it relates to God’s purpose; and it notes not only God’s setting forth, and revealing of Christ in the gospel, which was done in time, but also, and chiefly, his decreeing, foreordaining of Christ in his secret purpose from all eternity to the work and office of a redeemer. So the word is used, Eph. 1:9; and therefore the marginal rendering of it, whom God *foreordained*, is better than that in the text itself, whom God *hath set forth*. The apostle Peter speaks expressly of

it: 'Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,' 1 Pet. 1:20. You read of a decree concerning Christ, Ps. 2:7, 'I will declare the decree,' etc.; but that which I am upon was not the matter of the decree there spoken of.

(2) Christ's sending—I take it passively—lies in God's qualifying and fitting of him for his great work. This also is more remote from the close intendment of the sending; yet it also may be taken in. The wise God first fits and then sends; he never puts a person upon any special service but first he qualifies and fits him for that service. You have it exemplified in Moses and in several others. Now the restoration of man to God's image and favour, the redeeming and reconciling of the sinner to God, was the greatest work that ever was undertaken; and therefore if God will employ Christ about such a work, his wisdom engaged him first to fit him for it. Which accordingly he did; for in order thereunto, whereas Christ must have a body to fit him for dying and suffering, that God provided for him. 'Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared (or fitted) me,' Heb. 10:5. And whereas he must also have the Spirit, in a large proportion and plentiful effusion thereof, that too the Father doth furnish him with: Isa. 42:1, 'I have put my Spirit upon him;' John 3:34, 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.' Our blessed Saviour could need nothing more than a body and the Spirit to qualify and fit him for his work, and both, you see, were given to him: John 10:36, 'Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?' What was the Father's

sanctifying of Christ? I answer, It was partly his setting of Christ apart to, and partly his gifting and qualifying of Christ for, his office and undertaking; the latter of which the Father did for him as well as the former; and so he sanctified him. And observe, it was first sanctifying, and then sending. ‘Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent,’ etc.

(3) Thirdly, it lies in God’s authorising and commissionating of Christ to what he was to be and to do. The Father sent him, that is, gave him authority to engage as the redeemer of the world. Christ had a commission from God under hand and seal, as it were, before he meddled in his great negotiation: John 6:27, ‘Him hath God the Father sealed,’ or authorised by special commission; for though that be not all which is intended in the sealing, yet that is a great part of it. As princes, when they send abroad their ambassadors, or appoint their officers at home, they give them their commissions sealed to be their warrant for what they shall do, so God the Father did with Christ. He did not intrude or thrust himself upon what he undertook; no, but though he had in himself a strong inclination thereunto, yet first his Father must call him to it. He did not run before he was sent, as those prophets did, Jer. 23:21. So the apostle tells us, Heb. 5:4, 5, ‘No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.’ John 8:42, ‘I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.’ You see how his sending is opened by this; the due consideration of which doth administer matter of great support and encouragement to faith, as you will hear in the applying of the truth in hand.

(4) Fourthly, this sending of Christ consists in the Father's authoritative willing of him to take man's nature upon him, and in that nature so to do, and so to suffer. This is higher than the former; God did not only authorise Christ to engage, so as that he might, if he so pleased, undertake to redeem sinners, without any intrusion or usurpation; but he made this known to him as his will, and so, to speak according to our conceptions, he laid his command upon him to act accordingly. So as that Christ was under an obligation—which yet did not in the least destroy or lessen his liberty, or his merit, or his love—to come and to do as he did. Sending is an authoritative act amongst men; it was so in God towards Christ; the Father did not proceed with him in a way of mere offer or bare proposal or entreaty, but in a way of authority; he laid his injunction upon him to assume flesh, and in that flesh to make satisfaction. Therefore when Christ entered upon this work, speaking to his Father, he saith, 'Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God,' Heb. 10:7. And when he was discoursing of laying down his life, he adds, 'This commandment have I received of my Father,' John 10:18; the apostle also tells us that 'he became *obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross,' Phil. 2:8, which obedience necessarily supposes a command. And Christ was under a command in reference to his incarnation, as well as to his death and passion, for indeed without that there could have been none of this; therefore the text saith, 'God sent him in the likeness,' etc., that is, God ordered him to take our flesh. This sending then of Christ was the Father's authoritative calling of him to the office and work of a redeemer, which call was also backed with positive and peremptory commands as to the

management of both; in respect of which God is said to send him. And the truth is, Christ in the management of the whole work of our redemption was under, acted by, and according to, his Father's command; whereupon God calls him his servant, Isa. 42:1, and 53:11; and Christ himself, speaking to his Father, says, John 17:4, 'I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;' mark that, *which thou gavest me to do*, intimating that all his work was cut out for him by the will of his Father. So John 4:34, 'Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' John 6:38, 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;' upon this account therefore Christ may well be said to be sent by the Father. In scripture it is sometimes God *gave him*, and sometimes God *sent him*; Christ was *given*, in respect of the freeness of the grace of God towards us, and he was *sent*, in respect of the Father's authority over himself.

(5) Fifthly, take one thing more, God's sending of Christ imports his trusting of him with his great designs; this comes in too, if not directly, yet at leastwise collaterally or concomitantly. In all sending there is trust; when we send a person about our affairs we repose a trust in him, that he will be faithful in the management of our concerns; God sent Christ, that is, he put a great trust into his hands. It is as if the Father had said, 'My Son! here is a great work to be done, a work upon which my glory doth infinitely depend; all now lies at stake; as this is managed it will be well or ill with souls. Well, I will send thee, I will put all into thy hands, venture all with thee; I know thou wilt be faithful to secure my glory and to promote the good of souls;

I will trust thee, and none but thee, with such great things as these are.’ This, I say, is implied in God’s sending of Christ.

And now, by all put together, you see how or in what respects Christ was sent, and sent by God the Father. You may, both to strengthen what hath been said, and also further to clear it up, take his own parallel: John 20:21 ‘As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you.’ So that look, what Christ’s sending of the apostles was in reference to their office, the same was God’s sending of Christ in reference to his office. How then did he send them? Why, 1. He designed, chose, selected them to and for the work of the ministry; 2. He qualified and fitted them for that work; 3. He authorised them by his special commission to undertake it; 4. He sent them out authoritatively to preach the gospel, and laid his commands upon them so to do; 5. He reposed a special trust in them that they would be faithful. Just thus—allowing for the pre-eminence of the person and of his office—did God send Christ, which fully agrees with the particulars that have been insisted upon. And as to the apostles, Christ had said the same before to his Father: John 17:18, ‘As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world;’ not that there was a parity or perfect equality between the one and the other, only a harmony and great agreement. So much for the first thing, the opening the nature of the act.

To remove a difficulty or answer an objection about the Father’s sending the Son—Christ not inferior to the Father

I proceed to the second, to answer an objection, or to remove a difficulty which here lies before us. That which hath been spoken seems to derogate from the greatness and glory of Christ’s

person; for did God thus send him? Surely then, as some argue, he is a person inferior to the Father; this sending seems to be inconsistent with his equality to his Father; if he was sent, and thus sent, doth not that speak his inferiority to that God who sent him, and by consequence that he is not God? Thus the Socinians argue from it; and this is one of those heads from which they fetch their arguments against Christ's deity. For the explaining of the thing, and the answering of the adversary, divines commonly lay down two things about it:

1. That sending doth not always imply inferiority or inequality; for persons who are equal, upon mutual consent, may send each the other, and if the person sent doth freely concur and consent with the person sending, there is no impeachment or intrenchment then upon the equality between them. And thus it was between God the Father and Christ. Had he been sent merely from the will of the Father, whether he himself would or no, then indeed the case had differed, and the objection would have carried strength in it; but it was quite otherwise. For Christ readily consented to and perfectly concurred with the Father, and he was as willing to be sent as the Father was to send him: 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' When the master sends the servant he goes because he must, but when the Father sends the Son he goes readily, because his will falls in with his Father's will; he obeys not upon necessity, but upon choice and consent. So it was with Christ in reference to his Father's sending of him; the will of the Son was as much for the work as the will of the Father himself. You must not look upon Christ as merely passive in the sending, for, in some respects, he sent himself; and his coming upon that great errand of man's redemption was his

own act as well as the Father's. As the Father is said to sanctify him, John 10:36, and yet he also is said to sanctify himself, John 17:19; and as the Father is said to give him, Rom. 8:32, and yet he also is said to give himself, Gal. 2:20; so here the Father is said to send him, yet he also, as he was one in nature and in will with the Father, may be said to send himself. Thus Augustine opens it. The expression in the text, 'God sent his Son,' doth not exclude the Son or the Spirit from the sending, or wholly appropriate it to the Father; it only notes the order of the persons in their working. The Father being the first in working, therefore the sending of Christ is ascribed to him; but there being nothing more in it than so, that will not prove any inequality in the persons, or any superiority that one hath over the other. This is one answer for the clearing up of the difficulty, and the weakening of the objection which we have to do with.

2. The learned further distinguish of a twofold inferiority; one in respect of nature, and one in respect of office, condition, or dispensation. As to the first, Christ neither was nor is in the least inferior to the Father, both having the same nature and essence, in respect of which he 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' Phil. 2:6. As to the second, Christ being considered as Mediator, as having assumed flesh, put himself into the sinner's stead, and undertaken to make satisfaction to God; so, without any derogation, it may be said of him that he was inferior to the Father. In reference to which it follows in the forementioned place, verses 7, 8, 'He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even

the death of the cross.’ And upon this he saith, John 14:28, ‘My Father is greater than I.’ He was in nature every way as great as the Father, but he having submitted to be made man, to be a surety, having condescended to the office and work of a redeemer in our flesh, so in respect of economy and dispensation the Father was greater than he. And by virtue of his superiority over Christ, as considered in this his voluntary examination [*death*], so he sent him, and laid his commands upon him, and dealt with him as you have heard: but yet his natural and essential greatness or equality with the Father was not at all by this impaired or lessened, which was the great truth to be secured against the adversary.

To give the grounds and reasons of the Father’s sending his Son

The third thing which I am to speak to is to inquire, so far as the word will warrant, into the grounds and reasons of Christ’s mission; wherefore did God send him? He who is so wise that he doth nothing, be it never so little or mean, but he hath his reasons for it, surely in so great a thing as the sending of his own Son he had very high and weighty reasons upon which he acted. And though it is most certain that he neither had, nor could have, any motives in a way of merit, to move him to this; yet it is as certain that he had great and urgent grounds for it, even such as might become a God in doing such a thing. He that in other things is a ‘God of judgment,’ Isa. 30:18, undoubtedly in this, which was his masterpiece, he would shew himself to be a God of judgment. It will therefore be worthy of a modest inquiry, to find out the reasons which the wise and gracious God went upon in the sending of his Son.

In the general, some must be sent. When I say must, I do not mean any simple or absolute necessity, as though it was simply and absolutely necessary that God should take some course, or employ some person from heaven for the redeeming and saving of the world. God forbid that I should assert a thing so utterly false, and so highly derogatory from the freeness of the grace of God in what he did! I only mean therefore that which we call hypothetical or conditional necessity; and so the business stood thus. God designed to glorify and advance his mercy to sinners; he had gracious purposes in himself towards man; and whereas all mankind lay before him in an undone and ruined condition, he would not leave them to perish eternally in that condition. Then supposing this, which cannot be denied, God must send, something must be done, or else these gracious purposes of God will be lost, and all men must inevitably perish for ever. For as to all other ways the sinner's case was desperate, with respect to them there was no hope or help, some new and strange course must be taken, or else, as things stand, on the creature's part there is nothing to be looked for but hell and damnation. Now things being brought to this pass, therefore God will send, yea, he will send his own Son, for he will be sure to pitch upon a way which shall infallibly and effectually do the work. Observe it in the text, when, or because, it was impossible for the law to do, then, or therefore, God sent his Son. Since neither the law, nor anything else, could operate to any purpose towards the advancing of God's honour, and the promoting of the sinner's good, it was necessary, in order to these great ends, that God himself should interpose in some extraordinary way, which thereupon he accordingly did in the sending of Christ.

But more particularly; let us take it for granted that there was a necessity of sending, yet why did God pitch upon his Son and send him? Might not some other person have been sent as well as he? or might not some other way have been found out as good as this?

I answer, no; Christ the Son must be the very person whom God will send. And him he pitched upon, so far as we poor shallow mortals are able to judge of his deep and unsearchable actings, or to assign the reasons of them, for these reasons:

Why God sent his Son: Reason 1

First, because he was the person with whom the Father had covenanted about this very thing. There was a covenant, commonly called the covenant of redemption, which had passed between these two persons, in which the Father engaged so and so to Christ, and Christ reciprocally engaged so and so to the Father—a considerable part of the terms and matter of which covenant is set down, Isa. 53:10, ‘When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,’ etc. The Father covenants to do thus and thus for fallen man; but first, in order thereunto, the Son must covenant to take man’s nature, therein to satisfy offended justice, to repair and vindicate his Father’s honour, etc. Well, he submits, assents to these demands, indents and covenants to make all good; and this was the covenant of redemption. Now upon this covenant God sends his Son, that being done in pursuance of, and agreeable to, that admirable compact or stipulation that had passed between them both. So that this sending was not founded merely upon the Father’s absolute will or

sovereignty over Christ, but upon the federal agreement made between them as to this very matter.

Why God sent his Son: Reason 2

Secondly, God sent Christ because he saw that was the very best way which could be taken, and therefore in wisdom he pitched upon it. Oh there was no way like to that! The Father had great designs now to carry on; as, for example, to let the world see what an evil thing sin was, what a dreadful breach it had made between himself and the creature, how terrible and impartial his justice was, what an ocean of love he had in his heart to promote the sinner's happiness, yet so as, in the first place, to secure and advance his own glory in the magnifying of all his attributes, to endear himself, his Son, and all his mercies to his people, to lay a sure foundation for the righteousness and salvation of believers. Were not these great and glorious designs? Now there was no way for the accomplishing and effecting of these comparable to this of God sending his Son. What God might have done some other way by his absolute power and will, abstracting from his decree, I dare not inquire into, much less determine anything about it; or whether this was the only way, I leave to others to discuss. But certainly this was the best, the fittest way, and therefore the wise God pitched upon it. Augustine went no higher than thus.

Why God sent his Son: Reason 3

Thirdly, Christ was sent, because as this was the best and the fittest way, so he was the best and the fittest person to be employed in such an embassy. God always sends the fittest messengers