

Is The Destiny of Man To Become Gods?

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“I Said You Are gods”

There are many cults and cultic practitioners that believe the bible teaches that it is the destiny of man to become God. The scriptures they use to proclaim this heresy is a passage that Jesus uses that references an Old Testament text.

Let's examine the text to see whether there is any validity in their claims and interpretation.

John 10:34-36

34 Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'?"

35 "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

36 do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Jesus is quoting from the Old Testament ...

Psalms 82:6

¶ I said, "You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High.

What do these Scriptures mean?

First, it is a common technique with those who seek to deceive to take the Scriptures *out of context*. An examination of the text will illustrate this clearly.

Psalms 82:1-8

1 ¶ <<A Psalm of Asaph.>> God takes His stand in His own congregation; **He judges in the midst of the rulers.**

2 **How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked?** Selah.

3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

5 **They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are shaken.**

6 ¶ I said, "You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High.

7 **"Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes."**

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You who possesses all the nations.

We see in context that God is delivering His message to the magistrates and rulers of the people who stand in His stead upon the earth. These being the official representatives and commissioned agents of God. As such they are commanded and rebuked by God as His commissioned agents to "judge justly." The "magistrates" and "rulers" are all appointed by God as His agents to do His will on earth. They have failed in their "office" ordained by God. We see in verse 7 that those failing in their God ordained office are to die like men. In fact, all men have failed to execute judgement in a

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godly manner. The result in verse 9 validates, for God Himself shall come to judge the earth. Other scriptures to demonstrate that the magistrates and leaders are agents of God upon the earth.

God proclaims that Moses, as God's agent upon the earth will be like a God to Pharaoh

Exodus 7:1

¶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you [as] God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.

Is there anyone who would pervert this to proclaim Moses a God? ... and Aaron as the prophet of Moses? Probably, because there is much perversion of God's truth in the world, but the plain truth is NO, God is not declaring Moses to be a God, nor Aaron his prophet at all. This is the expression that God used for the magistrates, rulers and leaders ordained to proclaimed His Word, His Justice and His Ways upon the earth to as His agents. Please refer to Appendice A for commentaries on the subject.

Now for the confrontation between Jesus and the Jews beginning in verse 22.

John 10:22-39

22 ¶ At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem;
23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.
24 The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "**How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.**"
25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.
26 "**But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.**

Jesus in essence tells these they are lost and hell-bound. They are not of the body nor will they be of the body of Christ, His Church.

27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;
28 and **I give eternal life to them**, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Jesus claims Divinity, by saying He gives eternal life. Eternal life is the exclusive prerogative of God. No man can give eternal life ... only God can.

29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.
30 "**I and the Father are one.**"

Jesus claims equality with God. Some outside the body try to interpret this as to mean the same as the marriage covenant where the two flesh shall become one. This is a totally false understanding of the Scripture. Jesus is proclaiming equality with God, that

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He is in fact "God with us." The very next verse will attest to this by the reaction of the non-believing Jews.

31 **The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.**

The Jews knew full well what Jesus is claiming here. There was no mistake nor was there any misunderstanding.

32 Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

33 The Jews answered Him, "**For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.**"

Indeed did Jesus claim **to Be God. The Messiah is the God-Man,**

How is it that there are still non-believers who claim that Jesus never claimed to be God?

For a more in-depth treatment of that subject, please see the topical study under God: *Jesus is God.*

The Scriptures plainly claim that Jesus did as the above illustrates. He then continues to quote Psalm 82. Those appointed by God (prophets, judges and kings) to be judges and purveyors of God's Law among His people are the ones referenced by God as gods. Their duly ordained office was to represent Him to the people. That is the context of the phrase. Jesus in turn was confronting "the gods" for their non-belief in His Divinity and their refusal to believe He is their Messiah. Jesus challenges the Jews by quoting Psalm 82, "I have said, You are gods."

34 Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'?"

35 "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

This is an argument from the lesser ... they are God's duly appointed agents (prophets, judges and kings) ... to the greater in verse 36.

36 do you say of Him, whom **the Father sanctified and sent into the world**, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, '**I am the Son of God**'?

Jesus in essence proclaims, If they were gods, how much more am I?

37 "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;

38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that **the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.**"

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Jesus again claim equality with the Father. He again repeats His claim that He made in verse 30. Let there be no question that God the Father and Jesus are one and they are equal. The Jews were enraged and this confrontation ends with them seeking to seize Jesus so they could kill Him.

39 ¶ Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

Jesus quoted Psalm 82 to establish His Divinity. The passage "I said you are gods" is not to be twisted to mean that Jesus is teaching that the destiny of man is to become God. This is the false teaching of the cults like the Mormons, also known as the Latter Day Saints, the Jehovah Witnesses and the Word Faith movement. The Word Faith movement is much more subtle in their teaching in that they are more "covert" by redefining the meaning of "faith" to mean that man can be equal to or greater than God.

Avoid all such cults that teach that man can be equal to God. God give us a prophetic warning to those who would pervert this truth:

Ezekiel 28:6-10

6 **Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have made your heart Like the heart of God,**

7 Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, The most ruthless of the nations. And they will draw their swords Against the beauty of your wisdom And defile your splendor.

8 'They will bring you down to the pit, And you will die the death of those who are slain In the heart of the seas.

9 **'Will you still say, "I am a god," In the presence of your slayer, Though you are a man and not God, In the hands of those who wound you?**

10 'You will die the death of the uncircumcised By the hand of strangers, For I have spoken!' declares the Lord GOD!'"

Are there any doubters of God now that the destiny of man is not to be gods or God or anything else? The destiny of man is indeed a glorious one, but not one to be equal with God, now while in the flesh, nor later in spirit.

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Appendix A: Expository

John Gill on Psalm 82:6

Ver. 6. I have said, ye are gods, &c.] In the law, **Ex 21:6, 22:28** or they were so by his appointment and commission; he constituted them judges and magistrates, invested them with such an office, by which they came to have this title; see **Ro 13:1**, and so our Lord interprets these words, that they were gods "to whom" the word of God came, which gave them a commission and authority to exercise their office, **Joh 10:35**, or rather "against whom" it came, pronouncing the sentence of death on them, as in **Ps 82:7**, to which the reference is; declaring, that though they were gods by office, yet were mortal men, and should die. The Targum is, "I said, as angels are ye accounted"; and so judges and civil magistrates had need to be as angels, and to have the wisdom of them; see **2Sa 14:20**. Jarchi interprets it of angels, but magistrates are undoubtedly meant:

and all of you are children of the most High; the Targum here again renders it,

“the angels of the most High:”

and so Aben Ezra explains it of them who are called the sons of God, **Job 38:7** but men in power are meant, who, because of their eminency and dignity, their high office, post, and place, are so called; see **Ge 6:2; Ps 89:6**.

John Gill on John 10:34

Ver. 34. Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, &c.] In the law which was given unto them, of which they boasted, and pretended to understand, and interpret, even in **Ps 82:6**; for the law includes not only the Pentateuch, but all the books of the Old Testament: it is an observation of one of the Jewish doctors {t}, that

“with the wise men of blessed memory, it is found in many places that the word law comprehends the Prophets and the Hagiographa.”

Among which last stands the book of Psalms; and this may be confirmed by a passage out of the Talmud {u}; it is asked,

“from whence does the resurrection of the dead appear, hrwth Nm, "out of the law?"”

It is answered,

“as it is said in **Ps 84:4**: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will still praise thee, Selah; they do praise thee", it is not said, but "they will praise thee"; from hence is a proof of the resurrection of the dead, "out of the law".”

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The same question is again put, and then **Isa 52:8** is cited, and the like observation made upon it. Moreover, this is a way of speaking used by the Jews, when they introduce another citing a passage of Scripture thus {w}, Mkrwtb bytk alh, "is it not written in your law", **De 4:9**, "only take heed to thyself", &c. so here the Scripture follows,

I said, ye are gods? which is spoken to civil magistrates, so called, because of their authority and power; and because they do, in some sort, represent the divine majesty, in the government of nations and kingdoms. Many of the Jewish writers, by "gods", understand "the angels". The Targum paraphrases the words thus:

"I said ye are accounted as angels, as the angels on high, all of you;"

and to this sense some of their commentators interpret it. Jarchi's gloss is, ye are gods; that is, angels; for when I gave the law to you, it was on this account, that the angel of death might not any more rule over you: the note of Aben Ezra is, "and the children of the Most High": as angels; and the sense is, your soul is as the soul of angels: hence the {x} Jew charges Christ with seeking refuge in words, that will not profit, or be any help to him, when he cites these words, showing that magistrates are called gods, when the sense is only, that they are like to the angels in respect of their souls: but let it be observed, that it is not said, "ye are as gods", as in **Ge 3:5**, but "ye are gods"; not like unto them only, but are in some sense gods; and besides, to say that they are like to angels, with respect to their souls, which come from above, is to say no more of the judges of the earth, than what may be said of every man: to which may be added, that this objector himself owns, that judges are called Myhla, "gods", as in **Ex 22:9**; the cause of both parties shall come before Myhla, "the judges"; and that even the word is used in this sense in this very psalm, from whence these words are cited, **Ps 82:1**, "he judgeth among" Myhla, "the gods"; and both Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret this text itself in the same way, and observe, that judges are called gods, when they judge truly and aright: all which is sufficient to justify our Lord in the citation of this passage, and the use he makes of it.

{t} R. Azarias in Meor Enayim, c. 7. fol. 47. 1.

{u} T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 91. 2.

{w} T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 32. 2.

{x} R. Isaac Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 51. p. 440, 441.

Psalms - The Treasury of David on 82:6

EXPOSITION

Ver. 6. I have said, ye are gods. The greatest honour was thus put upon them; they were delegated gods, clothed for a while with a little of that authority by which the Lord judges among the sons of men.

And all of you are children of the Most High. This was their ex-officio character, not their moral or spiritual relationship. There must be some government among men, and

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as angels are not sent to dispense it, God allows men to rule over men, and endorses their office, so far at least that the prostitution of it becomes an insult to his own prerogatives. Magistrates would have no right to condemn the guilty if God had not sanctioned the establishment of government, the administration of law, and the execution of sentences. Here the Spirit speaks most honourably of these offices, even when it censures the officers; and thereby teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, honour to the office even if we award censure to the officer bearer.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Asaph, who has written so much in the previous Psalms of the coming of Christ in the flesh, now speaks of his second coming to judgment. Josephus Maria Thomasius. 1649-1713.

Ver. 6. Ye are gods, etc. It is, of course, to civil governors, especially those entrusted with the administration of justice, that the prophet addresses this stern admonition. He calls them "the gods," and "the sons of the Most High." To the people of Israel this kind of appellation would not seem over bold: for it was applied to judges in well known texts of the Law of Moses. Thus, in the code of civil statutes delivered at Sinai, it is said, Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people. **Ex 22:28**. Nor is that the only instance of the kind. In two other passages of the same code (**Ex 21:6 22:8-9**), the word which our translators have rendered "the judges" is in the Hebrew, "the gods," or "God." Since the ordinary Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is almost always used in the plural form, it is hard to say whether it ought to be rendered in these passages in the singular or plural. The meaning is the same either way. It is a matter of indifference, for example, whether the law in **Ex 21:6**, be rendered thus, His (the bondman's) master shall bring him to the gods; or with the Septuagint, his master shall bring him to the judgment seat of God. (prosto krithrion tou Teou). In either case the terms used are plainly meant to imply that the Majesty of God is present in the place of judgment. As it is said of Solomon that he sat on the throne of the LORD as King, **1Ch 29:23**, so it may be said of every magistrate that he sits in God's seat. God has put upon him a portion of his own dominion and authority; and has ordained that he is to be obeyed, not for wrath's sake only, but for conscience sake. The civil magistrate, in discharging his high function, may justly claim to govern with a divine right. No one needs to be told that this old doctrine of the divine right of rulers has been woefully abused. Sycophantic divines have often made of it a flattering unction for the care of princes; teaching them that they owed no obedience to the laws; that they were responsible to none but God for their administration; that any attempt on the part of the people to curb their tyranny, or to depose them from their seats when milder measures failed, was rebellion against God whose Viceregents they were. Even now, the same doctrine occasionally makes itself heard from the pulpit and the press; and thus men attempt to subject the consciences of the people to the caprices of tyrants. Let it be carefully observed that the harp of Asaph lends no sanction to this "right divine of kings to govern wrong." If the prophet testifies that princes are gods, he includes in the honour the humblest magistrate. The elders administering justice in the gate of Bethlehem, though their town be little among the thousands of Judah, sit in God's seat as truly as King Solomon on his ivory throne in the

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porch of judgment at Jerusalem. The common saying that "the divine right of kings is the divine right of constables," is a rough way of expressing a Bible truth. Let this be borne in mind, and no one will allege Scripture in defence of royal claims to indefeasible and irresponsible authority, or claim for such authority the sanction of divine right. But while care ought to be taken to guard the divine right of civil government from abuse, the right itself is not to be forgotten. The state is an ordinance of God, having, like the family, its foundations in the very constitution of human nature. The officers of the state, whether supreme or subordinate, have a divine right to administer justice in the community over which Providence has placed them. They who resort to the civil magistrate for judgment, resort to the judgment seat of God; just as they who resort to the Ministry of the Word resort to the Great Prophet of the Church. Unless the magistrate had received a commission from God, he could not lawfully bear the sword. To take the life of an unarmed fellow man, without a commission from the Most High warranting the act, would be to commit murder. William Binnie.

Ver. 6. In his *Lex Rex*, Rutherford argues from this psalm that judges are not the creatures of kings, to execute their pleasure, and do not derive their power from the monarch, but are authorized by God himself as much as the king, and are therefore bound to execute justice whether the monarch desires it or no.

Ver. 6. I have said, ye are gods. Princes and judges are gods (Elohim), on the ground that unto them the word of God came (**Joh 10:35**), constituting them such. Even here, where God is about to pass sentence on them, he begins with recognizing their divinely appointed dignity on which they presumed, as if giving them absolute power to do as they pleased, right or wrong; forgetting that high office has its duties as well as its dignities. Sonship is closely allied to kingship and judgeship. These combined dignities, which by all others have been abused, shall be realized in all their grandest ideal by the coming King, Judge, and Son of the Most High (**Ps 2:6-7,10-12.**) A. R. Fausset.

Ver. 6. I have said, ye are gods. As parasites in base flattery and compliance with their pride, have vainly called some of them so, and as some princes have most wickedly and blasphemously affected to be called, yea to be adored, as gods, (God will take highest vengeance upon all those who take his name upon them, or submit to it when given them), so God himself hath put his own name upon magistrates, to mind them of their duty, or for a twofold end: First, that being called gods, they should judge and rule as God doth, or with a mind like God, free from the mixture of a private or passionate spirit, and filled with a love to, and a delight in, impartial judgment and righteousness. Secondly, that being called gods, all men might learn their duty, freely to submit to them and duly to honour them; seeing any dishonour done to them reflects upon God whose name they bear. Joseph Caryl.

Ver. 6. Gods. It is not Jah or Jehovah, a name of essence, but Eloah or Elohim, a name of office that is given them. Thomas Gataker.

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Ver. 6-7. Ye are gods; there he considered their pomp and dignity: But ye shall die like men; there he minds their end, that with the change of his note they might also change countenance. He tells them their honour, but withal their lot. In power, wealth, train, titles, friends, they differ from others; in death they differ not from others. They are cold when winter comes, withered with age, weak with sickness, and melt away with death, as the meanest: all to ashes. All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower, **1Pe 1:24**: the glory, that is, the best of it, but a flower. No great difference, the flower shows fairer, the grass stands longer, one scythe cuts down both. Beasts fat and lean, fed in one pasture, killed in one slaughter. The prince in his lofty palace, the beggar in his lowly cottage, have double difference, local and ceremonial height and lowness; yet meet at the grave, and are mingled in ashes. We walk in this world as a man in a field of snow; all the way appears smooth, yet cannot we be sure of any step. All are like actors on a stage, some have one part and some another, death is still busy amongst us; here drops one of the players, we bury him with sorrow, and to our scene again: then falls another, yea all, one after another, till death be left upon the stage. Death is that damp which puts out all the dim lights of vanity. Yet man is easier to believe that all the world shall die, than to suspect himself. Thomas Adams.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 6. Ye are gods. The passage in the Old Testament which involves the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. J. P. Lange.

Matthew Henry Commentary on Psalm 82:6-8

We have here,

I. Earthly gods abased and brought down, **Ps 82:6-7**. The dignity of their character is acknowledged (**Ps 82:6**): I have said, You are gods. They have been honoured with the name and title of gods. God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words **Ex 22:28**, Thou shalt not revile the gods. And, if they have this style from the fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? He called them gods because unto them the word of God came, so our Saviour expounds it (**Joh 10:35**); they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shields of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, **Ro 13:4**. All of them are in this sense children of the Most High. God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or,

"Because I said, You are gods, you have carried the honour further than was intended and have imagined yourselves to be the children of the Most High,"

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as the king of Babylon (**Isa 14:14**), I will be like the Most High, and the king of Tyre (**Eze 28:2**), Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God. It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it and puffed up with it, and so to think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration: You shall die like men. This may be taken either,

1. As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their misrule put the foundations of the earth out of course. God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes (and their being Israelites shall not secure them any more than their being judges) or like one of the angels that sinned, or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time. **Job 34:26**, He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others. Let those that abuse their power know that God will take both it and their lives from them; for wherein they deal proudly he will show himself above them. Or,

2. As the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world. Let them not be puffed up with their honour nor neglect their work, but let the consideration of their mortality be both mortifying to their pride and quickening to their duty.

"You are called gods, but you have no patent for immortality; you shall die like men, like common men; and like one of them, you, O princes! shall fall."

Note, Kings and princes, all the judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. *Mors sceptris ligonibus aequat*—Death mingles sceptres with spades.

II. The God of heaven exalted and raised high, **Ps 82:8**. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors; they turned a deaf ear to all he said and walked on in darkness; and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to take unto himself his great power: Arise, O God! judge the earth; and, when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it: Thou shalt inherit all nations. This has respect,

1. To the kingdom of providence. God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleases; he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man does of his inheritance. This we are to believe and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much into the hands of the wicked, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, **Job 9:24**. But God has reserved the power to himself and overrules them. In this faith we must pray,

"Arise, O God! judge the earth, appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thy own heart."

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There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges.

2. To the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth, and that promise is pleaded, that God shall give him the heathen for his inheritance. Thou, O Christ! shalt inherit all nations, and be the governor over them, **Ps 2:8, 22:28**. Let the second coming of Christ set to-rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another in reference to the mismanagements of power among men: one is **Re 19:6**, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; the other is **Re 22:20**, Surely, I come quickly.

Matthew Henry Commentary on John 10:22-38

Ver. 22. thru Ver. 38.

We have here another rencounter between Christ and the Jews in the temple, in which it is hard to say which is more strange, the gracious words that came out of his mouth or the spiteful ones that came out of theirs.

I. We have here the time when this conference was: It was at the feast of dedication, and it was winter, a feast that was annually observed by consent, in remembrance of the dedication of a new altar and the purging of the temple, by Judas Maccabaeus, after the temple had been profaned and the altar defiled; we have the story of it at large in the history of the Maccabees (lib. 1, cap. 4); we have the prophecy of it, **Dan 8:13-14**. See more of the feast, 2 Mac. 1:18. The return of their liberty was to them as life from the dead, and, in remembrance of it, they kept an annual feast on the twenty-fifth day of the month Cisleu, about the beginning of December, and seven days after. The celebrating of it was not confined to Jerusalem, as that of the divine feasts was, but every one observed it in his own place, not as a holy time (it is only a divine institution that can sanctify a day), but as a good time, as the days of Purim, **Es 9:19**. Christ forecasted to be now at Jerusalem, not in honour of the feast, which did not require his attendance there, but that he might improve those eight days of vacation for good purposes.

II. The place where it was **Joh 10:23**: Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch; so called **Ac 3:11**, not because built by Solomon, but because built in the same place with that which had borne his name in the first temple, and the name was kept up for the greater reputation of it. Here Christ walked, to observe the proceedings of the great sanhedrim that sat here **Ps 82:1**; he walked, ready to give audience to any that should apply to him, and to offer them his services. He walked, as it should seem, for some time alone, as one neglected; walked pensive, in the foresight of the ruin of the temple. Those that have any thing to say to Christ may find him in the temple and walk with him there.

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III. The conference itself, in which observe,

1. A weighty question put to him by the Jews, **Joh 10:24**. They came round about him, to tease him; he was waiting for an opportunity to do them a kindness, and they took the opportunity to do him a mischief. Ill-will for good-will is no rare and uncommon return. He could not enjoy himself, no, not in the temple, his Father's house, without disturbance. They came about him, as it were, to lay siege to him: encompassed him about like bees. They came about him as if they had a joint and unanimous desire to be satisfied; came as one man, pretending an impartial and importunate enquiry after truth, but intending a general assault upon our Lord Jesus; and they seemed to speak the sense of their nation, as if they were the mouth of all the Jews: How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us.

(1.) They quarrel with him, as if he had unfairly held them in suspense hitherto. thn quchn hmwn aireiv—How long dost thou steal away our hearts? Or, take away our souls? So some read it; basely intimating that what share he had of the people's love and respect he did not obtain fairly, but by indirect methods, as Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; and as seducers deceive the hearts of the simple, and so draw away disciples after them, **Ro 16:18, Ac 20:30**. But most interpreters understand it as we do: "How long dost thou keep us in suspense? How long are we kept debating whether thou be the Christ or no, and not able to determine the question?" Now, [1.] It was the effect of their infidelity, and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had so fully proved himself to be the Christ they were still in doubt concerning it; this they willingly hesitated about, when they might easily have been satisfied. The struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ, and their corruptions, which said, No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. Those who choose to be sceptics may, if they please, hold the balance so that the most cogent arguments may not weigh down the most trifling objections, but the scales may still hang even. [2.] It was an instance of their impudence and presumption that they laid the blame of their doubting upon Christ himself, as if he made them to doubt by inconsistency with himself, whereas in truth they made themselves doubt by indulging their prejudices. If Wisdom's sayings appear doubtful, the fault is not in the object, but in the eye; they are all plain to him that understands. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves to doubt.

(2.) They challenge him to give a direct and categorical answer whether he was the Messiah or no: "If thou be the Christ, as many believe thou art, tell us plainly, not by parables, as, I am the light of the world, and the good Shepherd, and the like, but totidem verbis—in so many words, either that thou art the Christ, or, as John Baptist, that thou art not," **Joh 1:20**. Now this pressing query of theirs was seemingly good; they pretended to be desirous to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was really bad, and put with an ill design; for, if he should tell them plainly that he was the Christ, there needed no more to make him obnoxious to the jealousy and severity of the Roman government. Every one knew the Messiah was to be a king, and therefore whoever pretended to be the Messiah would be prosecuted as a traitor, which was the thing they would have been at; for, let him tell them ever so plainly that he was the

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Christ, they would have this to say presently, Thou bearest witness of thyself, as they had said, **Joh 8:13**.

2. Christ's answer to this question, in which,

(1.) He justifies himself as not at all accessory to their infidelity and scepticism, referring them, [1.] To what he had said: I have told you. He had told them that he was the Son of God, the Son of man, that he had life in himself, that he had authority to execute judgment, &c. And is not this the Christ then? These things he had told them, and they believed not; why then should they be told them again, merely to gratify their curiosity? You believed not. They pretended that they only doubted, but Christ tells them that they did not believe. Scepticism in religion is no better than downright infidelity. It is not for us to teach God how he should teach us, nor prescribe to him how plainly he should tell us his mind, but to be thankful for divine revelation as we have it. If we do not believe this, neither should we be persuaded if it were ever so much adapted to our humour. [2.] He refers them to his works, to the example of his life, which was not only perfectly pure, but highly beneficent, and of a piece with his doctrine; and especially to his miracles, which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. It was certain that no man could do those miracles except God were with him, and God would not be with him to attest a forgery.

(2.) He condemns them for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding all the most plain and powerful arguments used to convince them: "You believed not; and again, You believed not. You still are what you always were, obstinate in your unbelief." But the reason he gives is very surprising: "You believed not, because you are not of my sheep: you believe not in me, because you belong not to me." [1.] "You are not disposed to be my followers, are not of a tractable teachable temper, have no inclination to receive the doctrine and law of the Messiah; you will not herd yourselves with my sheep, will not come and see, come and hear my voice." Rooted antipathies to the gospel of Christ are the bonds of iniquity and infidelity. [2.] "You are not designed to be my followers; you are not of those that were given me by my Father, to be brought to grace and glory. You are not of the number of the elect; and your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain evidence that you are not." Note, Those to whom God never gives the grace of faith were never designed for heaven and happiness. What Solomon saith of immorality is true of infidelity, It is a deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein, **Pr 22:14**. Non esse electum, non est causa incredulitatis propriè dicta, sed causa per accidens. Fides autem est donum Dei et effectus praedestinationis—The not being included among the elect is not the proper cause of infidelity, but merely the accidental cause. But faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination. So Jansenius distinguishes well here.

(3.) He takes this occasion to describe both the gracious disposition and the happy state of those that are his sheep; for such there are, though they be not.

[1.] To convince them that they were not his sheep, he tells them what were the characters of his sheep. First, They hear his voice **Joh 10:27**, for they know it to be his

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Joh 10:4, and he has undertaken that they shall hear it, **Joh 10:16**. They discern it, It is the voice of my beloved, **So 2:8**. They delight in it, are in their element when they are sitting at his feet to hear his word. They do according to it, and make his word their rule. Christ will not account those his sheep that are deaf to his calls, deaf to his charms, **Ps 58:5**. Secondly, They follow him; they submit to his guidance by a willing obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful conformity to his spirit and pattern. The word of command has always been, Follow me. We must eye him as our leader and captain, and tread in his steps, and walk as he walked—follow the prescriptions of his word, the intimations of his providence, and the directions of his Spirit—follow the Lamb (the dux gregis—the leader of the flock) whithersoever he goes. In vain do we hear his voice if we do not follow him.

[2.] To convince them that it was their great unhappiness and misery not to be of Christ's sheep, he here describes the blessed state and case of those that are, which would likewise serve for the support and comfort of his poor despised followers, and keep them from envying the power and grandeur of those that were not of his sheep.

First, Our Lord Jesus takes cognizance of his sheep: They hear my voice, and I know them. He distinguishes them from others **2Ti 2:19**, has a particular regard to every individual **Ps 34:6**; he knows their wants and desires, knows their souls in adversity, where to find them, and what to do for them. He knows others afar off, but knows them near at hand.

Secondly, He has provided a happiness for them, suited to them: I give unto them eternal life, **Joh 10:28**. 1. The estate settled upon them is rich and valuable; it is life, eternal life. Man has a living soul; therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul: therefore the happiness provided is eternal life, running parallel with his duration. Life eternal is the felicity and chief good of a soul immortal. 2. The manner of conveyance is free: I give it to them; it is not bargained and sold upon a valuable consideration, but given by the free grace of Jesus Christ. The donor has power to give it. He who is the fountain of life, and Father of eternity, has authorized Christ to give eternal life, **Joh 17:2**. Not I will give it, but I do give it; it is a present gift. He gives the assurance of it, the pledge and earnest of it, the first fruits and foretastes of it, that spiritual life which is eternal life begun, heaven in the seed, in the bud, in the embryo.

Thirdly, He has undertaken for their security and preservation to this happiness.

a. They shall be saved from everlasting perdition. They shall by no means perish for ever; so the words are. As there is an eternal life, so there is an eternal destruction; the soul not annihilated, but ruined; its being continued, but its comfort and happiness irrecoverably lost. All believers are saved from this; whatever cross they may come under, they shall not come into condemnation. A man is never undone till he is in hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, not one.

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b. They cannot be kept from their everlasting happiness; it is in reserve, but he that gives it to them will preserve them to it. (a.) His own power is engaged for them: Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare that he has them not only within his fold, and under his eye, but in his hand, interested in his special love and taken under his special protection (all his saints are in thy hand, **De 33:3**); yet their enemies are so daring that they attempt to pluck them out of his hand—his whose own they are, whose care they are; but they cannot, they shall not, do it. Note, Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of Christ from following him, reproving and threatening them, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail. (b.) His Father's power is likewise engaged for their preservation, **Joh 10:29**. He now appeared in weakness, and, lest his security should therefore be thought insufficient, he brings in his Father as a further security. Observe, [a.] The power of the Father: My Father is greater than all; greater than all the other friends of the church, all the other shepherds, magistrates or ministers, and able to do that for them which they cannot do. Those shepherds slumber and sleep, and it will be easy to pluck the sheep out of their hands; but he keeps his flock day and night. He is greater than all the enemies of the church, all the opposition given to her interests, and able to secure his own against all their insults; he is greater than all the combined force of hell and earth. He is greater in wisdom than the old serpent, though noted for subtlety; greater in strength than the great red dragon, though his name be legion, and his title principalities and powers. The devil and his angels have had many a push, many a pluck for the mastery, but have never yet prevailed, **Re 12:7-8**. The Lord on high is mightier. [b.] The interest of the Father in the sheep, for the sake of which this power is engaged for them: "It is my Father that gave them to me, and he is concerned in honour to uphold his gift." They were given to the Son as a trust to be managed by him, and therefore God will still look after them. All the divine power is engaged for the accomplishment of all the divine counsels. [c.] The safety of the saints inferred from these two. If this be so, then none (neither man nor devil) is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand, not able to deprive them of the grace they have, nor to hinder them from the glory that is designed them; not able to put them out of God's protection, nor get them into their own power. Christ had himself experienced the power of his Father upholding and strengthening him, and therefore puts all his followers into his hand too. He that secured the glory of the Redeemer will secure the glory of the redeemed. Further to corroborate the security, that the sheep of Christ may have strong consolation, he asserts the union of these two undertakers: "I and my Father are one, and have jointly and severally undertaken for the protection of the saints and their perfection." This denotes more than the harmony, and consent, and good understanding, that were between the Father and the Son in the work of man's redemption. Every good man is so far one with God as to concur with him; therefore it must be meant of the oneness of the nature of Father and Son, that they are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory. The fathers urged this both against the Sabellians, to prove the distinction and plurality of the persons, that the Father and the Son are two, and against the Arians, to prove the unity of the nature, that

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these two are one. If we should altogether hold our peace concerning this sense of the words, even the stones which the Jews took up to cast at him would speak it out, for the Jews understood him as hereby making himself God **Joh 10:33** and he did not deny it. He proves that none could pluck them out of his hand because they could not pluck them out of the Father's hand, which had not been a conclusive argument if the Son had not had the same almighty power with the Father, and consequently been one with him in essence and operation.

IV. The rage, the outrage, of the Jews against him for this discourse: The Jews took up stones again, **Joh 10:31**. It is not the word that is used before **Joh 8:59**, but *ebastasan liyouv*—they carried stones—great stones, stones that were a load, such as they used in stoning malefactors. They brought them from some place at a distance, as if he were preparing things for his execution without any judicial process; as if he were convicted of blasphemy upon the notorious evidence of the fact, which needed no further trial. The absurdity of this insult which the Jews offered to Christ will appear if we consider, 1. That they had imperiously, not to say impudently, challenged him to tell them plainly whether he was the Christ or no; and yet now that he not only said he was the Christ, but proved himself so, they condemned him as a malefactor. If the preachers of the truth propose it modestly, they are branded as cowards; if boldly, as insolent; but Wisdom is justified of her children. 2. That when they had before made a similar attempt it was in vain; he escaped through the midst of them **Joh 8:59**; yet they repeat their baffled attempt. Daring sinners will throw stones at heaven, though they return upon their own heads; and will strengthen themselves against the Almighty, though none ever hardened themselves against him and prospered.

V. Christ's tender expostulation with them upon occasion of this outrage **Joh 10:32**: Jesus answered what they did, for we do not find that they said any thing, unless perhaps they stirred up the crowd that they had gathered about him to join with them, crying, Stone him, stone him, as afterwards, Crucify him, crucify him. When he could have answered them with fire from heaven, he mildly replied, Many good works have I shown you from my Father: for which of those works do you stone me? Words so very tender that one would think they should have melted a heart of stone. In dealing with his enemies he still argued from his works (men evidence what they are by what they do), his good works—*kala erga*, excellent, eminent works. *Opera eximia vel praeclara*; the expression signifies both great works and good works.

1. The divine power of his works convicted them of the most obstinate infidelity. They were works from his Father, so far above the reach and course of nature as to prove him who did them sent of God, and acting by commission from him. These works he showed them; he did them openly before the people, and not in a corner. His works would bear the test, and refer themselves to the testimony of the most inquisitive and impartial spectators. He did not show his works by candle-light, as those that are concerned only for show, but he showed them at noon-day before the world, **Joh 18:20** See **Ps 111:6**. His works so undeniably demonstrated that they were an incontestable demonstration of the validity of his commission.

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2. The divine grace of his works convicted them of the most base ingratitude. The works he did among them were not only miracles, but mercies; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endear himself to them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these he had repeated, and multiplied: "Now for which of these do you stone me? You cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore you will pick a quarrel with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which." Note, (1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful. See how God argues to this purpose, **De 32:6, Jer 2:5, Mic 6:3**. (2.) We must not think it strange if we meet with those who not only hate us without cause, but are our adversaries for our love, **Ps 35:12; 41:9**. When he asks, For which of these do you stone me? as he intimates the abundant satisfaction he had in his own innocency, which gives a man courage in a suffering day, so he puts his persecutors upon considering what was the true reason of their enmity, and asking, as all those should do that create trouble to their neighbour, Why persecute we him? As Job advises his friends to do, **Job 19:28**.

VI. Their vindication of the attempt they made upon Christ, and the cause upon which they grounded their prosecution, **Joh 10:33**. What sin will want fig-leaves with which to cover itself, when even the bloody persecutors of the Son of God could find something to say for themselves?

1. They would not be thought such enemies to their country as to persecute him for a good work: For a good work we stone thee not. For indeed they would scarcely allow any of his works to be so. His curing the impotent man (**John 5**) and the blind man (**John 9**) were so far from being acknowledged good services to the town, and meritorious, that they were put upon the score of his crimes, because done on the sabbath day. But, if he had done any good works, they would not own that they stoned him for them, though these were really the things that did most exasperate them, **Joh 11:47**. Thus, though most absurd, they could not be brought to own their absurdities.

2. They would be thought such friends to God and his glory as to prosecute him for blasphemy: Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Here is,

(1.) A pretended zeal for the law. They seem mightily concerned for the honour of the divine majesty, and to be seized with a religious horror at that which they imagined to be a reproach to it. A blasphemer was to be stoned, **Le 24:16**. This law, they thought, did not only justify, but sanctify, what they attempted, as **Ac 26:9**. Note, The vilest practices are often varnished with plausible pretences. As nothing is more courageous than a well-informed conscience, so nothing is more outrageous than a mistaken one. See **Isa 66:5 Joh 16:2**.

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(2.) A real enmity to the gospel, on which they could not put a greater affront than by representing Christ as a blasphemer. It is no new thing for the worst of characters to be put upon the best of men, by those that resolve to give them the worst of treatment. [1.] The crime laid to his charge is blasphemy, speaking reproachfully and despitefully of God. God himself is out of the sinner's reach, and not capable of receiving any real injury; and therefore enmity to God spits its venom at his name, and so shows its ill-will. [2.] The proof of the crime: Thou, being a man, makest thyself God. As it is God's glory that he is God, which we rob him of when we make him altogether such a one as ourselves, so it is his glory that besides him there is no other, which we rob him of when we make ourselves, or any creature, altogether like him. Now, First, Thus far they were in the right, that what Christ said of himself amounted to this—that he was God, for he had said that he was one with the Father and that he would give eternal life; and Christ does not deny it, which he would have done if it had been a mistaken inference from his words. But, Secondly, They were much mistaken when they looked upon him as a mere man, and that the Godhead he claimed was a usurpation, and of his own making. They thought it absurd and impious that such a one as he, who appeared in the fashion of a poor, mean, despicable man, should profess himself the Messiah, and entitle himself to the honours confessedly due to the Son of God. Note, 1. Those who say that Jesus is a mere man, and only a made God, as the Socinians say, do in effect charge him with blasphemy, but do effectually prove it upon themselves. 2. He who, being a man, a sinful man, makes himself a god as the Pope does, who claims divine powers and prerogatives, is unquestionably a blasphemer, and that antichrist.

VII. Christ's reply to their accusation of him (for such their vindication of themselves was), and his making good those claims which they imputed to him as blasphemous **Joh 10:34**, &c. where he proves himself to be no blasphemer, by two arguments:—

1. By an argument taken from God's word. He appeals to what was written in their law, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture on his side. It is written **Ps 82:6**, I have said, You are gods. It is an argument a minore ad majus—from the less to the greater. If they were gods, much more am I. Observe,

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(1.) How he explains the text **Joh 10:35**: He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and therefore they are called gods, **Ex 22:28**. To some the word of God came immediately, as to Moses; to others in the way of an instituted ordinance. Magistracy is a divine institution; and magistrates are God's delegates, and therefore the scripture calleth them gods; and we are sure that the scripture cannot be broken, or broken in upon, or found fault with. Every word of God is right; the very style and language of scripture are unexceptionable, and not to be corrected, **Mt 5:18**.

(2.) How he applies it. Thus much in general is easily inferred, that those were very rash and unreasonable who condemned Christ as a blasphemer, only for calling himself the Son of God, when yet they themselves called their rulers so, and therein the

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scripture warranted them. But the argument goes further **Joh 10:36**: If magistrates were called gods, because they were commissioned to administer justice in the nation, say you of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest? We have here two things concerning the Lord Jesus:—[1.] The honour done him by the Father, which he justly glories in: He sanctified him, and sent him into the world. Magistrates were called the sons of God, though the word of God only came to them, and the spirit of government came upon them by measure, as upon Saul; but our Lord Jesus was himself the Word, and had the Spirit without measure. They were constituted for a particular country, city, or nation; but he was sent into the world, vested with a universal authority, as Lord of all. They were sent to, as persons at a distance; he was sent forth, as having been from eternity with God. The Father sanctified him, that is, designed him and set him apart to the office of Mediator, and qualified and fitted him for that office. Sanctifying him is the same with sealing him, **Joh 6:27**. Note, Whom the Father sends he sanctifies; whom he designs for holy purposes he prepares with holy principles and dispositions. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he finds or makes holy. The Father's sanctifying and sending him is here vouched as a sufficient warrant for his calling himself the Son of God; for because he was a holy thing he was called the Son of God, **Lu 1:35** See **Ro 1:4**. [2.] The dishonour done him by the Jews, which he justly complains of—that they impiously said of him, whom the Father had thus dignified, that he was a blasphemer, because he called himself the Son of God: "Say you of him so and so? Dare you say so? Dare you thus set your mouths against the heavens? Have you brow and brass enough to tell the God of truth that he lies, or to condemn him that is most just? Look me in the face, and say it if you can. What! say you of the Son of God that he is a blasphemer?" If devils, whom he came to condemn, had said so of him, it had not been so strange; but that men, whom he came to teach and save, should say so of him, be astonished, O heavens! at this. See what is the language of an obstinate unbelief; it does, in effect, call the holy Jesus a blasphemer. It is hard to say which is more to be wondered at, that men who breathe in God's air should yet speak such things, or that men who have spoken such things should still be suffered to breathe in God's air. The wickedness of man, and the patience of God, as it were, contend which shall be most wonderful.

2. By an argument taken from his own works, **Joh 10:37-38**. In the former he only answered the charge of blasphemy by an argument ad hominem—turning a man's own argument against himself; but he here makes out his own claims, and proves that he and the Father are one **Joh 10:37-38**: If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. Though he might justly have abandoned such blasphemous wretches as incurable, yet he vouchsafes to reason with them. Observe,

(1.) From what he argues—from his works, which he had often vouched as his credentials, and the proofs of his mission. As he proved himself sent of God by the divinity of his works, so we must prove ourselves allied to Christ by the Christianity of ours. [1.] The argument is very cogent; for the works he did were the works of his Father, which the Father only could do, and which could not be done in the ordinary course of nature, but only by the sovereign over-ruling power of the God of nature. Opera Deo propria—works peculiar to God, and Opera Deo Digna—works worthy of

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God—the works of a divine power. He that can dispense with the laws of nature, repeal, alter, and overrule them at his pleasure, by his own power, is certainly the sovereign prince who first instituted and enacted those laws. The miracles which the apostles wrought in his name, by his power, and for the confirmation of his doctrine, corroborated this argument, and continued the evidence of it when he was gone. [2.] It is proposed as fairly as can be desired, and put to a short issue. First, If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. He does not demand a blind and implicit faith, nor an assent to his divine mission further than he gave proof of it. He did not wind himself into the affections of the people, nor wheedle them by sly insinuations, nor impose upon their credulity by bold assertions, but with the greatest fairness imaginable quitted all demands of their faith, further than he produced warrants for these demands. Christ is no hard master, who expects to reap in assents where he has not sown in arguments. None shall perish for the disbelief of that which was not proposed to them with sufficient motives of credibility, Infinite Wisdom itself being judge. Secondly, " But if I do the works of my Father, if I work undeniable miracles for the confirmation of a holy doctrine, though you believe not me, though you are so scrupulous as not to take my word, yet believe the works: believe your own eyes, your own reason; the thing speaks itself plainly enough." As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and common providence **Ro 1:20**, so the invisible things of the Redeemer were seen by his miracles, and by all his works both of power and mercy; so that those who were not convinced by these works were without excuse.

(2.) For what he argues—that you may know and believe, may believe it intelligently, and with an entire satisfaction, that the Father is in me and I in him; which is the same with what he had said **Joh 10:30**: I and my Father are one. The Father was so in the Son as that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and it was by a divine power that he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father as that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of his mind, not by communication, but by consciousness, having lain in his bosom. This we must know; not know and explain (for we cannot by searching find it out to perfection), but know and believe it; acknowledging and adoring the depth, when we cannot find the bottom.