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COMMENTARY

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE
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PART 2: NEW TESTAMENT**

by John Nelson Darby

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John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

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JOHN

The Gospel of John has a peculiar character, as every Christian perceives. It does not present the birth of Christ in this world, looked at as the Son of David. It does not trace His genealogy back to Adam, in order to bring out His title of Son of man. It does not exhibit the Prophet who, by His testimony, accomplished the service of His Father in this respect here below. It is neither His birth, nor the commencement of His gospel, but His existence before the beginning of everything that had a beginning. "In the beginning was the Word." In short it is the glory of the Person of Jesus, the Son of God, above all dispensation — a glory developed in many ways in grace, but which is always itself. It is that which He is; but making us share in all the blessings that flow from it, when He is so manifested as to impart them.

The first chapter asserts what He was before all things, and the different characters in which He is a blessing to man, being made flesh. He is, and He is the expression of, the whole mind that subsists in God, the Logos. In the beginning He was. If we go back as far as is possible to the mind of men, how far soever beyond all that has had a beginning, He is. This is the most perfect idea we can form historically, if I may use such an expression, of the existence of God or of eternity. "In the beginning was the Word." Was there nothing beside Him? Impossible! Of what would He have been the Word? "The Word was with God." That is to say, a personal existence is ascribed to Him. But, lest it may be thought that He was something which eternity implies but which the Holy Ghost comes to reveal, it is said that He "was God." In His existence eternal — in His nature divine — in His Person distinct, He might have been spoken of as an emanation in time, as though His personality were of time, although eternal in His nature: the Spirit therefore adds, "In the beginning he was with God." It is the revelation of the eternal Logos before all creation. This Gospel therefore really begins before Genesis. The Book of Genesis gives us the history of the world in time: John gives us that of the Word, who existed in eternity before the world was; who — when man can speak of beginning — was; and, consequently, did not begin to exist. The language of the Gospel is as plain as possible, and, like the sword of paradise, turns

every way, in opposition to the thoughts and reasonings of man, to defend the divinity and personality of the Son of God.

By Him also were all things created. There are things which had a beginning; they all had their origin from Him: "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Precise, positive, and absolute distinction between all that has been made and Jesus. If anything has been made, it is not the Word; for all that has been made was made by that Word.

But there is another thing, besides the supreme act of creating all things (an act that characterises the Word) there is that which was in Him. All creation was made by Him; but it does not exist in Him. But in Him was life. In this He was in relation with an especial part of creation — a part which was the object of the thoughts and intentions of God. This "life was the light of men," revealed itself as a testimony to the divine nature, in immediate connection with them, as it did not with respect to any others at all.* But, in fact, this light shone in the midst of that which was in its own nature** contrary to it, and evil beyond any natural image, for where light comes, darkness is no longer: but here the light came, and the darkness had no perception of it — remained darkness, which therefore neither comprehended nor received it. These are the relations of the Word with creation and with man, seen abstractedly in His nature. The Spirit pursues this subject, giving us details, historically, of the latter part.

[* The form of expression in Greek is very strong, as identifying completely the life with the light of men, as co-extensive propositions.]

[** It is not here my object to develop the manner in which the word meets the errors of the human mind; but, in fact, as it reveals truth on God's part, it also replies, in a remarkable way, to all the mistaken thoughts of man. With respect to the Lord's Person, the first verses of the chapter bear witness to it. Here the error, which made of the principle of darkness a second God in equal conflict with the good Creator, is refuted by the simple testimony that the life was the light, and the darkness a moral condition, without power, and negative, in the midst of which this life was manifested in light. If we have the truth itself, we have no need to be acquainted with error. The voice of the Good Shepherd known, we are sure that none other is of Him. But, in fact, the possession of the truth, as revealed in the scripture, is an answer to all the errors into which man has fallen, innumerable as they are.]

We may remark here — and the point is of importance — how the Spirit passes from the divine and eternal nature of the Word who was before all things, to the manifestation, in this world, of the Word made flesh in the Person of Jesus. All the ways of God, the dispensations, His government of the world, are passed over in silence. In beholding Jesus on the earth we are in immediate connection with Him as existing before the world was. Only He is introduced by John, and that which is found in the world is recognised as created. John is come to bear witness of the Light. The true Light was that which, coming into the world, shone for all men, and not for the Jews only. He is come into the world; and the world, in darkness and blind, has not known Him. He is come unto His own, and His own (the Jews) have not received Him. But there were some who received Him. Of them two things are said: they have received authority to become the children* of God, to take their place as such; and, secondly, they are, in fact, born of God. Natural descent, and the will of man, went for nothing here.

[* Sons in Paul's writings is the place Christians have in connection with God into which Christ has brought them by redemption, that is, His own relative place with God according to His counsels. Children is that they are of the Father's family. (Both are found in Romans 8:14-16, and the force of both may there be seen. We cry Father, so are children, but by the Spirit we take up the place of grown up sons with Christ before God.) Up to the end of verse 13, we have abstractedly what Christ intrinsically was and from eternity, and what man was — darkness. This first to the end of verse 5. Then God's dealings John's place and service; then the Light came, came into the world He had made, and it did not know Him, to His own, the Jews, and they would not have Him. But there were those, born of God, who had authority to take the place of children, a new race.]

Thus we have seen the Word, in His nature, abstractedly (v. 1-3); and, as life, the manifestation of divine light in man, with the consequences of that manifestation (v. 4, 5); and how He was received where it was so (v. 10-13). This general part, in regard to His nature, ends here. The Spirit carries on the history of what the Lord is, manifested as man on earth. So that, as it were, we begin again here (v. 14) with Jesus on the earth — what the Word became, not what He was. As light in the world, there was the unanswered claim of what He was on man. Not knowing Him, or rejecting Him where He was dispensationally in relationship was the only difference. Grace in life-giving power then comes in to lead men to receive Him. The world did not know its Creator come into it as light, His own

rejected their Lord. Those who were born not of man's will but of God received Him. Thus we have not what the Word was, but what He became.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us in the fullness of grace and truth. This is the great fact, the source of all blessing to us;* that which is the full expression of God, adapted, by taking man's own nature, to all that is in man, to meet every human need, and all the capacity of the new nature in man to enjoy the expression of all in which God is suited to him. It is more than light, which is pure and shows all things; it is the expression of what God is, and God in grace, and as a source of blessing. And note, God could not be to angels what He is to man — grace, patience, mercy, love, as shown to sinners. And all this He is, as well as the blessedness of God, to the new man. The glory in which Christ was seen, thus manifested (by those who had eyes to see), was that of an only Son with His Father, the one concentrating object of His delight as Father.

[* It is indeed the source of all blessing; but the condition of man was such, that without His death no one would have had any part in the blessing. Unless the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.]

These are the two parts of this great truth. The Word, who was with God and who was God, was made flesh; and He who was beheld on the earth had the glory of an only Son with the Father.

Two things are the result. Grace (what greater grace? It is love itself that is revealed, and towards sinners) and truth, that are not declared, but come, in Jesus Christ. The true relation of all things with God is shown, and their departure from it. This is the groundwork of truth. Everything takes its true place, its true character, in every respect; and the center to which all refers is God. What God is, what perfect man, what sinful man, what the world, what its prince, Christ's presence brings all out. Grace then and truth are come. The second thing is, that the only Son in the bosom of the Father reveals God, and reveals Him consequently as known by Himself in that position. And this is largely connected with the character and revelation of grace in John: first, fullness, with which we are in communication, and from which we have all received; then relationship.

But there are yet other important instructions in these verses. The Person of Jesus, the Word made flesh, dwelling among us, was full of grace and

truth. Of this fullness we have all received: not truth upon truth (truth is simple, and puts everything exactly in its place, morally and in its nature); but we have received that which we needed — grace upon grace, the favor of God abundantly, divine blessings (the fruit of His love) heaped one upon another. Truth shines — everything is perfectly manifested; grace is given.

The connection of this manifestation of the grace of God in the Word made flesh (in which perfect truth also displays itself) with other testimonies of God is then taught us. John bore witness to Him; the service of Moses had quite another character. John preceded Him in his service on earth; but Jesus must be preferred before him; for (humble as He might be) God above all, blessed for ever, He was before John, although coming after him. Moses gave the law, perfect in its place — requiring from man, on God's part, that which man ought to be. Then God was hidden, and God sent out a law showing what man ought to be; but now God has revealed Himself by Christ, and the truth (as to everything) and grace are come. The law was neither the truth, full and entire,* in every respect, as in Jesus, nor grace; it was no transcript of God, but a perfect rule for man. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, not by Moses. Nothing can be more essentially important than this statement. Law requires from man what he ought to be before God, and, if he fulfills it, it is his righteousness. Truth in Christ shows what man is (not ought to be), and what God is, and, as inseparable from grace, does not require but brings to man what he needs. If thou knewest the gift of God, says the Savior to the Samaritan woman. So at the end of the wilderness journey Balaam has to say: "according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" The verb "came" is in the singular after grace and truth. Christ is both at once; indeed, if grace were not there He would not be the truth as to God. To require from man what he ought to be was righteous requirement. But to give grace and glory, to give His Son was another thing in every respect; only sanctioning the law as perfect in its place.

[* Indeed it told what man ought to be, not what man or anything actually was, and this is properly truth.]

We have thus the character and the position of the Word made flesh — that which Jesus was here below, the Word made flesh; His glory as seen by faith, that of an only Son with His Father. He was full of grace and

truth. He revealed God as He knew Him, as the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. It was not only the character of His glory here below; it is what He was (what He had been, what He ever is) in the Father's own bosom in the Godhead: and it is thus that He declared Him. He was before John the Baptist, although coming after him; and He brought, in His own Person, that which was in its nature entirely different from the law given by Moses.

Here then is the Lord manifested on earth. His relations with men follow, the positions He took, the characters He assumed, according to the purposes of God, and the testimony of His word among men. First of all, John the Baptist gives place to Him. It will be remarked that he bears testimony in each of the parts* into which this chapter is divided — verse 6,** in the effect of the abstract revelation of the nature of the Word; as light verse 15, with regard to His manifestation in the flesh; verse 19, the glory of His Person, although coming after John; verse 29, respecting His work and the result; and verse 36, the testimony for the time being, in order that He might be followed, as having come to seek the Jewish remnant.

[* It will be observed that the chapter is thus divided:1-18 (this part is subdivided into 1-5, 6-13, 14-18), 19-28, 29-34 (sub-divided into 29-31, 32-34), 35 to the end. These last verses are subdivided into 35-42, and 42 to the end. That is, first, what Christ is abstractedly and intrinsically — John's testimony to Him as light; when come, what He is personally in the world — John, only forerunner of Jehovah, witness of Christ's excellency; the work of Christ (Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, He baptises with the Holy Ghost, and is Son of God); John gathers to Him; He gathers to Himself. This goes on till the upright remnant of Israel own Him Son of God, King of Israel; then He takes the larger character of Son of Man. All the personal characters of Christ, so to speak, are found here and His work, but not His relative characters, not Christ, not Priest, not Head of the assembly His body; but Word, Son of God, Lamb of God, Baptiser with the Holy Ghost; and, according to Psalm 2, Son of God, King of Israel; and Son of man, according to Psalm 8, whom the angels serve; God withal, life, and the light of men.]

[** The strictly abstract statement ends in verse 5, and goes by itself. The reception of Christ as come into the world as light introduces John. We are no longer in what is strictly abstract; though not developing the object — what the Word became — it is historical as to the reception of the light, and thus shows what man was, and what he is by grace as born of God, in respect of the object.]

After the abstract revelation of the nature of the Word, and that of His manifestation in the flesh, the testimony actually born in the world is given. Verses 19-28 form a kind of introduction, in which, on the inquiry of the scribes and Pharisees, John gives account of himself, and takes occasion to speak of the difference between himself and the Lord. So that, whatever the characters may be that Christ takes in connection with His work, the glory of His Person is ever first in view. The witness is occupied naturally, so to speak, with this, before bearing his formal testimony to the office which he fulfilled. John is neither Elias nor that prophet (that is, the one of whom Moses spoke) nor the Christ. He is the voice mentioned by Isaiah, who was to prepare the way of the Lord before Him. It is not precisely before the Messiah, although He was that; neither is it Elias before the day of Jehovah, but the voice in the wilderness before the Lord (Jehovah) Himself. Jehovah was coming. It is this consequently of which he speaks. John baptised indeed unto repentance; but there was already One, unknown, among them, who, coming after him, was yet his superior, whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

We have next the direct testimony of John, when he sees Jesus coming to him. He points Him out, not as the Messiah, but according to the whole extent of His work as enjoyed by us in the everlasting salvation He has accomplished, and the full result of the glorious work by which it was accomplished. He is the Lamb of God, one whom God alone could furnish, and was for God, and according to His mind, who takes away the sin (not the sins) of the world. That is to say, He restores (not all the wicked, but) the foundations of the world's relations with God. Since the fall, it is indeed sin — whatever may be His dealings* that God had to consider in His relations with the world. The result of Christ's work shall be, that this will no longer be the case; His work shall be the eternal basis of these relations in the new heavens and the new earth, sin being entirely put aside as such. We know this by faith before the public result in the world.

[* As the flood, law, grace. There was a paradise of innocence, then a world of sin, by-and-by a kingdom of righteousness, finally a world (new heavens and new earth) wherein dwelleth righteousness. But it is everlasting righteousness, and founded on that work of the Lamb of God which can never lose its value. It is an immutable state of things. The church or assembly is something above and apart from all this, though revealed in it.]

Although a Lamb for the sacrifice, He is preferred before John the Baptist, for He was before him. The Lamb to be slain was Jehovah Himself.

In the administration of the ways of God, this testimony was to be born in Israel, although its subject was the Lamb whose sacrifice reached to the sin of the world, and the Lord, Jehovah. John had not known Him personally; but He was the one and only object of his mission.

But this was not all. He had made Himself man, and as man had received the fullness of the Holy Ghost, who had descended upon Him and abode upon Him; and the man thus pointed out, and sealed on the part of the Father, was Himself to baptise with the Holy Ghost. At the same time He was pointed out by the descent of the Holy Ghost in another character, to which John therefore bears testimony. Thus subsisting and seen and sealed on the earth, He was the Son of God. John recognises Him and proclaims Him as such.

Then comes what may be called the direct exercise and effect of his ministry at that time. But it is always the Lamb of whom he speaks; for that was the object, the design of God, and it is that which we have in this Gospel, although Israel is recognised in its place; for the nation held that place from God.

Upon this the disciples of John* follow Christ to His abode. The effect of John's testimony is to attach the remnant to Jesus, the center of their gathering. Jesus does not refuse it, and they accompany Him. Nevertheless this remnant — how far soever the testimony of John might extend — do not, in fact, go beyond the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. This was the case, historically;** it but Jesus knew them thoroughly, and declares the character of Simon as soon as he comes to Him, and gives him his appropriate name. This was an act of authority which proclaimed Him the head and center of the whole system. God can bestow names; He knows all things. He gave this right to Adam, who exercised it according to God with regard to all that was put under him as well as in the case of his wife. Great kings, who claim this power, have done the same. Eve sought to do it, but she was mistaken; although God can give an understanding heart which, under His influence, speaks aright in this respect. Now Christ does so here, with authority and with all knowledge, the moment the case presents itself.

[* Note, it is not on his public testimony, but on the expression of his heart addressed to no one, which they heard.]

[** A principle of the deepest interest to us, as the effect of grace. In receiving Jesus we receive all that He is; notwithstanding that at the moment we may only perceive in Him that which is the least exalted part of His glory.]

Verse 43.* We have next the immediate testimony of Christ Himself and of His followers. In the first place, on repairing to the scene of His earthly pilgrimage, according to the prophets, He calls others to follow Him. Nathanael, who begins by rejecting one who came from Nazareth, sets before us, I doubt not, the remnant of the last days (the testimony to which the gospel of grace belongs came first, verses 29-34). We see him at first rejecting the despised of the people, and under the fig-tree, which represents the nation of Israel; as the fig-tree which was to bear no more fruit, represents Israel under the old covenant. But Nathanael is the figure of a remnant, seen and known by the Lord, in connection with Israel. The Lord who thus manifested Himself to his heart and conscience is confessed as Son of God and King of Israel. This is formally the faith of the spared remnant of Israel in the last days according to Psalm 2. But those who thus received Jesus when He was on earth should see yet greater things than those which had convinced them. Moreover thenceforth** they should see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. He who by His birth had taken His place among the children of men would, by that title, be the object of service to the most excellent of God's creatures. The expression is emphatic. The angels of God Himself should be in the service of the Son of man. So that the remnant of Israel without guile acknowledges Him to be the Son of God and King of Israel; and the Lord declares Himself also to be the Son of man — in humiliation indeed, but the object of service to the angels of God. Thus we have the Person and the titles of Jesus, from His eternal and divine existence as the Word, to His millennial place as King of Israel and Son of man; + which He already was as born into this world, but which will be realised when He returns in His glory.

[* These verses 38 and 43 take in the two characters in which we have to do with Christ. He receives them and they abide with Him, and He calls upon them to follow Him. We have no world where we can abide, no center in it which gathers round itself those rightly disposed by grace. No prophet, no servant of God could. Christ is the one center of gathering in the world. Then following supposes that we are not in God's rest. In Eden no

following was called for. In heaven there will be none. It is perfect joy and rest where we are. In Christ we have a divine object, giving us a clear path through a world in which we cannot rest with God, for sin is there.]

[** Not “hereafter.”

[+ Except what concerns the assembly and Israel. Here, He is not High Priest, He is not Head of the body, He is not revealed as the Christ. John does not give what shows man in heaven, but God in man on earth — not what is heavenly as gone up, but what is divine here. Israel is looked on all through as rejected. The disciples own Him as the Christ, but He is not so proclaimed.]

Before going farther, let us review some points in this chapter. The Lord is revealed as the Word — as God and with God — as light — as life: secondly, as the Word made flesh, having the glory of an only Son with His Father — as such He is full of grace and truth come by Him, of His fullness we have all received, and He has declared the Father (compare chap. 14) the Lamb of God — the One on whom the Holy Ghost could descend, and who baptised with the Holy Ghost — the Son of God: * thirdly, His work what He does, Lamb of God taking away sin, and Son of God and King of Israel. This closes the revelation of His Person and work. Then verses 35-42 John’s ministry, but where Jesus, as He alone could, becomes the gathering center. Verse 43, Christ’s ministry, in which He calls to follow Him, which, with verses 38, 39, give His double character as the one attractive point in the world; with this His entire humiliation, but owned through a divine testimony reaching the remnant as according to Psalm 2, but the taking His title of Son of man according to Psalm 8 — the Son of man: we may say, all His personal titles. His relationship to the assembly is not here, nor His function as Priest; but that which belongs to His Person, and the connection of man with God in this world. Thus, besides His divine nature, it is all that He was and will be in this world: His heavenly place and its consequences to faith are taught elsewhere, and barely alluded to, when necessary, in this Gospel.

[* Here He is seen as the Son of God in this world; in verse 14, He is in the glory of an only Son with His Father; and verse 18, He is so in the bosom of His Father.]

Observe that, in preaching Christ, in a way to a certain degree complete, the heart of the hearer may truly believe and attach itself to Him, though investing Him with a character which the condition of soul cannot yet go beyond, and while ignorant of the fullness in which He has been revealed.

Indeed where it is real, the testimony, however exalted in character, meets the heart where it is. John says, “Behold the Lamb of God!” “We have found the Messiah,” say the disciples who followed Jesus on John’s testimony.

Note also, that the expression of what was in John’s heart had greater effect than a more formal, more doctrinal testimony. He beheld Jesus, and exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God!” The disciples heard him, and followed Jesus. It was, no doubt, his proper testimony on God’s part, Jesus being there; but it was not a doctrinal explanation like that of the preceding verses.

The two testimonies to Christ that were to be born in this world, both gathering to Him as center, had been born; that of John, and that of Jesus taking His place in Galilee with the remnant — the two days of God’s dealings with Israel here below.* The third day we find in chapter 2. A marriage takes place in Galilee. Jesus is there; and the water of purification is changed into the wine of joy for the marriage-feast. Afterwards at Jerusalem He cleanses the temple of God with authority, executing judgment on all those who profaned it. In principle these are the two things that characterise His millennial position. Doubtless these things took place historically; but, as introduced here and in this manner, they have evidently a wider meaning. Besides, why the third day? After what? Two days of testimony had taken place — that of John, and that of Jesus; and now blessing and judgment are accomplished. In Galilee the remnant had their place; and it is the scene of blessing, according to Isaiah 9 — Jerusalem is that of judgment. At the feast He would not know His mother: this was the link of His natural relation with Israel, which, looking at Him as born under the law, was His mother. He separates Himself from her to accomplish blessing. It is only in testimony therefore in Galilee, for the moment. It is when He returns that the good wine will be for Israel — true blessing and joy at the end. Nevertheless He still abides with His mother, whom, as to His work, He did not acknowledge. And this also was the case with regard to His connection with Israel.

[* Remark here, that Jesus accepts the place of that center round which souls are to be gathered — a very important principle. None else could hold this place. It was a divine one. The world was all wrong, without God, and a new gathering out of it was to be made round Him. Next, He furnishes the path in which man was to walk — “Follow me.” Adam in paradise needed

no path. Christ gives a divinely ordered one, in a world where of itself there could not be a right one, for its whole condition was the fruit of sin. Thirdly, He reveals man in His Person as the glorious Head over all, whom the highest creatures serve.]

Afterwards, in judging the Jews and judicially cleansing the temple, He presents Himself as the Son of God. It is His Father's house. The proof of this which He gives is His resurrection, when the Jews should have rejected and crucified Him. Moreover He was not only the Son: it was God who was there — not in the temple. It was empty — that house built by Herod. The body of Jesus was now the true temple. Sealed by His resurrection, the scriptures and the word of Jesus were of divine authority to the disciples, as speaking of Him according to the intention of the Spirit of God.

This subdivision of the book ends here. It closes the earthly revelation of Christ including His death; but even so it is the sin of the world. Chapter 2 gives the millennium; chapter 3 is the work in and for us which qualifies for the kingdom on earth or heaven; and the work for us, closing Messiah's connection with the Jews, opens the heavenly things by the lifting up of the Son of man — divine love and eternal life.

The miracles that He wrought convinced many as to their natural understanding. No doubt it was sincerely; but a just human conclusion. But another truth now opens. Man, in his natural state,* was really incapable of receiving the things of God; not that the testimony was insufficient to convince him, nor that he was never convinced: many were so at this time; but Jesus did not commit Himself to them. He knew what man was. When convinced, his will, his nature, was not altered. Let the time of trial come, and he would show himself as he was, alienated from God, and even His enemy. Sad but too true testimony! The life, the death, of Jesus proves it. He knew it when He began His work. This did not make His love grow cold; for the strength of that love was in itself.

[* Observe, that the state of man is here manifested fully and thoroughly. Supposing him to be outwardly righteous according to the law, and to believe in Jesus according to sincere natural convictions, he clothes himself with this, in order to hide from himself what he really is. He does not know himself at all. What he is remains untouched. And he is a sinner. But this leads us to another observation. There are two great principles from Paradise itself — responsibility and life. Man can never disentangle them, till he learns that he is lost, and that no good exists in him. Then he is glad to

know that there is a source of life and pardon outside himself. It is this which is shown us here. There must be a new life; Jesus does not instruct a nature which is only sin. These two principles run through scripture in a remarkable way: first, as stated, in Paradise, responsibility and life in power. Man took of one tree, failing in responsibility, and forfeited life. The law gave the measure of responsibility when good and evil were known, and promised life on the ground of doing what it required, satisfying responsibility. Christ comes, meets the need of man's failure in responsibility, and is, and gives, eternal life. Thus, and thus only, can the question be met, and the two principles reconciled. Moreover two things are presented in Him to reveal God. He knows man, and all men. What a knowledge in this world! A prophet knows that which is revealed to him; he has, in that case, divine knowledge. But Jesus knows all men in an absolute way. He is God. But when once He has introduced life in grace, He speaks of another thing; He speaks that which He knows, and testifies that which He has seen. Now He knows God His Father in heaven. He is the Son of man who is in heaven. He knows man divinely; but He knows God and all His glory divinely also. What a magnificent picture, or, rather should I say, revelation, of that which He is for us! For it is here as man that He tells us this; and also, in order that we may enter into it and enjoy it, He becomes the sacrifice for sin according to the eternal love of God His Father.]

But there was a man (chap. 3) and that a Pharisee — who was not satisfied with this inoperative conviction. His conscience was reached. Seeing Jesus, and hearing His testimony, had produced a sense of need in his heart. It is not the knowledge of grace, but it is with respect to man's condition a total change. He knows nothing of the truth, but he has seen that it is in Jesus, and he desires it. He has also at once an instinctive sense that the world will be against him; and he comes by night. The heart fears the world as soon as it has to do with God; for the world is opposed to Him. The friendship of the world is enmity against God. This sense of need made the difference in the case of Nicodemus. He had been convinced like the others. Accordingly he says, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." And the source of this conviction was the miracles. But Jesus stops him short; and that on account of the true need felt in the heart of Nicodemus. The work of blessing was not to be wrought by teaching the old man. Man needed to be renewed in the source of his nature, without which he could not see the kingdom.* The things of God are spiritually discerned; and man is carnal, he has not the Spirit. The Lord does not go beyond the kingdom — which, moreover, was not the law — for Nicodemus ought to have known something about the kingdom. But He does not begin to teach the Jews as a prophet under the law. He presents the kingdom itself; but to see it, according to His testimony, a man must be born again. But the

kingdom as thus come in the carpenter's Son could not be seen without a wholly new nature, it struck no chord of man's comprehension or Jews' expectation, though testimony to it was amply given in word and work: as to entering and having a part in it there is more development as to the how. Nicodemus sees no farther than the flesh.

[* That is, as it was then come. They saw the carpenter's Son. In glory, of course, every eye on earth shall see it.]

The Lord explains Himself. Two things were necessary — to be born of water, and of the Spirit. Water cleanses. And, spiritually, in his affections, heart, conscience, thoughts, actions, etc., man lives, and in practice is morally purified, through the application, by the power of the Spirit, of the word of God, which judges all things, and works in us livingly new thoughts and affections. This is the water; it is withal the death of the flesh. The true water which cleanses in a christian way came forth from the side of a dead Christ. He came by water and blood, in the power of cleansing and of expiation. He sanctifies the assembly by cleansing it through the washing of water by the word. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is therefore the mighty word of God which, since man must be born again in the principle and source of his moral being, judges, as being death, all that is of the flesh.* But there is in fact the communication of a new life; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, is not flesh, has its nature from the Spirit. It is not the Spirit — that would be an incarnation; but this new life is spirit. It partakes of the nature of its origin. Without this, man cannot enter into the kingdom. But this is not all. If it was a necessity for the Jew, who already was nominally a child of the kingdom, for here we deal with what is essential and true, it was also a sovereign act of God, and consequently it is accomplished wherever the Spirit acts in this power. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." This in principle opens the door to the Gentiles.

[* Observe here that baptism, instead of being the sign of the gift of life, is the sign of death. We are baptised to His death. In coming up out of the water, we begin a new life in resurrection (all that belonged to the natural man being reckoned to be dead in Christ, and passed away for ever). "Ye are dead"; and "he that is dead is freed justified] from sin." But we live also and have a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus Peter compares baptism to the deluge, through which Noah was saved, but which destroyed the old world, that had, as it were, a new life when it emerged from the flood.]

Nevertheless Nicodemus, as a master of Israel, ought to have understood this. The prophets had declared that Israel was to undergo this change, in order to enjoy the fulfillment of the promises (see Ezekiel 36), which God had given them with regard to their blessing in the holy land. But Jesus spoke of these things in an immediate way, and in connection with the nature and the glory of God Himself. A master in Israel ought to have known that which the sure word of prophecy contained. The Son of God declared that which He knew, and that which He had seen with His Father. The defiled nature of man could not be in relationship with Him who revealed Himself in heaven whence Jesus came. The glory (from the fullness of which He came, and which formed therefore the subject of His testimony as having seen it, and from which the kingdom had its origin) could have nothing in it that was defiled. They must be born again to possess it. He bore testimony therefore, as having come from above and knowing that which was suitable to God His Father. Man did not receive His testimony. Convinced outwardly by miracles he might be; but to receive that which was befitting the presence of God was another thing. And if Nicodemus could not receive the truth in its connection with the earthly part of the kingdom, of which even the prophets had spoken, what would he and the other Jews do if Jesus spoke of heavenly things? Nevertheless no one could learn anything about them by any other means. No one had gone up there and come down again to bring back word. Jesus only, in virtue of what He was, could reveal them — the Son of man on earth, existing at the same time in heaven, the manifestation to men of that which was heavenly, of God Himself in man as God being in heaven and everywhere — as the Son of man being before the eyes of Nicodemus and of all. Nevertheless He was to be crucified, and thus lifted up from the world to which He had come as the manifestation of the love of God in all His ways and of God Himself, and so only could the door be opened for sinful men into heaven, so only a link formed for man with it.

For this brought out another fundamental truth. If heaven was in question, something more was needed than being born again. Sin existed. It must be put away for those who should have eternal life. And if Jesus, coming down from heaven, was come to impart this eternal life to others, He must, in undertaking this work, put sin away — be thus made sin — in order that the dishonor done to God should be washed away, and the truth of

His character (without which there is nothing sure, or good, or righteous) maintained. The Son of man must be lifted up, even as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, that the curse, under which the people were dying, might be removed. His divine testimony rejected, man, as he was down here, showed himself to be incapable of receiving blessing from above. He must be redeemed, his sin expiated and put away; he must be treated according to the reality of his condition, and according to the character of God who cannot deny Himself. Jesus in grace undertook to do this. It was necessary that the Son of man should be lifted up, rejected from the earth by man, accomplishing the atonement before the God of righteousness. In a word, Christ comes with the knowledge of what heaven is and divine glory. In order that man might share it, the Son of man must die — must take the place of expiation — outside the earth.* Observe here the deep and glorious character of that which Jesus brought with Him, of the revelation He made.

[* On the cross, Christ is not on the earth, but lifted up from it, rejected ignominiously by man, but withal through this presented as a victim on the altar to God.]

The cross, and the absolute separation between man on earth and God — this is the meeting-place of faith and God; for there is at once the truth of man's condition, and the love that meets it. Thus, in approaching the holy place from the camp, the first thing they met on going through the gate of the court was the altar. It presented itself to every one that quitted the world without, and entered in. Christ, lifted up from the earth, draws all men to Him. But if (owing to man's state of alienation and guilt) it needed that the Son of man should be lifted up from the earth, in order that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life, there was another aspect of this same glorious fact; God had so loved the world that He had given His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life. On the cross we see the necessity morally of the death of the Son of man; we see the ineffable gift of the Son of God. These two truths unite in the common object of the gift of eternal life to all believers. And if it was to all believers, it was a question of man, of God, and of heaven, and went outside the promises made to the Jews, and the limits of God's dealings with that people. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it. But salvation is by faith; and he who believes in the coming of the Son, putting all things now to the test, is not

condemned (his state is decided thereby); he who believes not is condemned already, he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God, he has manifested his condition.

And this is the thing that God lays to their charge. Light is come into the world, and they have loved darkness because their works were evil. Could there be a more just subject of condemnation? It was no question of their not finding pardon, but of their preferring darkness to light that they might continue in sin.

The rest of the chapter presents the contrast between the positions of John and of Christ. They are both before the eye. The one is the faithful friend of the Bridegroom, living only for Him; the other is the Bridegroom, to whom all belongs: the one, in himself, an earthly man, great as might be the gift he had received from heaven; the other from heaven Himself, and above all. The bride was His. The friend of the Bridegroom, hearing His voice, was full of joy. Nothing more beautiful than this expression of John the Baptist's heart, inspired by the Lord's presence, near enough to Jesus to be glad and rejoice that Jesus was all. Thus it ever is.

With respect to the testimony, John bore witness in connection with earthly things. For that end he was sent. He who Himself came from heaven was above all, and bore witness of heavenly things, of that which He had seen and heard. No one received His testimony. Man was not of heaven. Without grace one believes according to one's own thoughts. But in speaking as a man on the earth, Jesus spoke the words of God; and he who received His testimony set to his seal that God was true. For the Spirit is not given by measure. As a witness the testimony of Jesus was the testimony of God Himself; His words, the words of God. Precious truth! Moreover, He was the Son,* and the Father loved Him, and had given all things into His hand. This is another glorious title of Christ, another aspect of His glory. But the consequences of this for man were eternal. It was not almighty help to pilgrims, nor faithfulness to promises, so that His people could trust in Him in spite of all. It was the quickening life-giving Son of the Father. All was comprised in it. "He who believeth in the Son hath everlasting life, he who believeth not shall not see life." He remains in his guilt. The wrath of God abides on him.

[* The question presents itself naturally, where John's testimony closes and the evangelist's begins. The last two verses, I apprehend, are the evangelist's.]

All this is a kind of introduction. The ministry of the Lord, properly so called, comes after. John (v. 24) was not yet cast into prison. It was not till after that event that the Lord began His public testimony. The chapter we have been considering explains what His ministry was, the character in which He came, His position, the glory of His Person, the character of the testimony He bore, the position of man in connection with the things of which He spake, beginning with the Jews, and going on, by the new birth, the cross, and the love of God, to His rights as come into the world, and the supreme dignity of His own Person, to His properly divine testimony, to His relationship with the Father, the object of whose love He was, and who had given all things into His hand. He was the faithful witness, and that of heavenly things (see chap. 3:13), but He was also the Son Himself come from the Father. Everything for man rested on faith in Him. The Lord comes out from Judaism, while presenting the testimony of the prophets, and brings from heaven the direct testimony of God and of glory, showing the only ground on which we can have a part in it. Jew or Gentile must be born again; and heavenly things could only be entered by the cross, the wondrous proof of God's love to the world. John gives place to Him, bringing out — not in public testimony to Israel but to his disciples — the true glory of His Person and of His work* in this world. The thought of the bride and Bridegroom is, I believe, general. John says indeed that he is not the Christ, and that the earthly bride belongs to Jesus; but He has never taken her; and John speaks of His rights, which for us are realised in a better land and another clime than this world. It is, I repeat, the general idea. But we have now entered on the new ground of a new nature, the cross, and the world and God's love to it.

[* Observe here, that the Lord — while not concealing (v. 11-13) the character of His testimony, as indeed He could not — speaks of the necessity of His death, and of the love of God. John speaks of the glory of His Person. Jesus magnifies His Father by submitting to the necessity which the condition of men imposed on Him, if He would bring them into a new relationship with God. "God," said He, "hath so loved." John magnifies Jesus. All is perfect and in place. There are four points in that which is said with regard to Jesus: His supremacy; His testimony — this is the Baptist's testimony to Him. What follows (v. 35, 36) His having all things given to Him by the Father who loved Him, life everlasting in contrast with the wrath that is the portion of the unbeliever from God — is rather the new revelation; the purpose of

God giving all things to Him, and His being Himself eternal life come down from heaven, is that of John the evangelist.]

And now (chap. 4) Jesus, being driven away by the jealousy of the Jews, begins His ministry outside that people, while still acknowledging their true position in the dealings of God. He goes away into Galilee; but His road led Him by Samaria, in which dwelt a mingled race of strangers and of Israela race who had forsaken the idolatry of the strangers, but who, while following the law of Moses and calling themselves by the name of Jacob, had set up a worship of their own at Gerizim. Jesus does not enter the town. Being weary He sits down outside the town on the brink of the well — for He must needs go that way; but this necessity was an occasion for the acting of that divine grace which was in the fullness of His Person, and which overflowed the narrow limits of Judaism.

There are some preliminary details to remark before entering on the subject of this chapter. Jesus did not Himself baptise, for He knew the whole extent of the counsels of God in grace, the true object of His coming. He could not bind souls by baptism to a living Christ. The disciples were right in so doing. They had so to receive Christ. It was faith on their part.

When rejected by the Jews, the Lord does not contend. He leaves them; and, coming to Sychar, He found Himself in the most interesting associations as regards the history of Israel, but in Samaria: sad testimony of Israel's ruin. Jacob's well was in the hands of people who called themselves of Israel, but the greater part of whom were not so, and who worshipped they knew not what, although pretending to be of the stock of Israel. Those who were really Jews had driven away the Messiah by their jealousy. Hea man despised by the people — had gone away from among them. We see Him sharing the sufferings of humanity, and, weary with His journey, finding only the side of a well on which to rest at noon. He contents Himself with it. He seeks nothing but the will of His God: it brought Him thither. The disciples were away; and God brought thither at that unusual hour a woman by herself. It was not the hour at which women went out to draw water; but, in the ordering of God, a poor sinful woman and the Judge of quick and dead thus met together.

The Lord, weary and thirsty, had no means even to quench His thirst. He is dependent as man, on this poor woman to have a little water for His

thirst. He asks it of her. The woman, seeing that He is a Jew, is surprised; and now the divine scene unfolds itself, in which the heart of the Savior, rejected by men and oppressed by the unbelief of His people, opens to let that fullness of grace flow out which finds its occasion in the necessities and not in the righteousness of men. Now this grace did not limit itself to the rights of Israel, nor lend itself to national jealousy. It was a question of the gift of God, of God Himself who was there in grace, and of God come down so low, that, being born among His people, He was dependent, as to His human position, on a Samaritan woman for a drop of water to quench His thirst. “If thou knewest the gift of God, and not, who I am, but] who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink”; that is to say, If thou hadst known that God gives freely, and the glory of His Person who was there, and how deeply He had humbled Himself, His love would have been revealed to thy heart, and would have filled it with perfect confidence, in regard even to the wants which a grace like this would have awakened in thy heart. “Thou wouldest have asked,” said the divine Savior, “and he would have given thee” the living water that springeth up into everlasting life. Such is the heavenly fruit of the mission of Christ, wherever He is received.* His heart lays it open (it was revealing Himself), pours it out into the heart of one who was its object; consoling itself for the unbelief of the Jews (rejecting the end of promise) by presenting the true consolation of grace to the misery that needed it. This is the true comfort of love, which is pained when unable to act. The floodgates of grace are lifted up by the misery which that grace waters. He makes manifest that which God is in grace; and the God of grace was there. Alas! the heart of man, withered up and selfish, and pre-occupied with its own miseries (the fruits of sin), cannot at all understand this. The woman sees something extraordinary in Jesus; she is curious to know what it means — is struck with His manner, so that she has a measure of faith in His words; but her desires are limited to the relief of the toils of her sorrowful life, in which an ardent heart found no answer to the misery it had acquired for its portion through sin.

[* Note, too, here, that it is not as with Israel in the wilderness that there was water from the smitten rock to drink. Here the promise is of a well of water springing up unto everlasting life in ourselves.]

A few words on the character of this woman. I believe the Lord would show that there is need, that the fields were ready for the harvest; and that

if the wretched self-righteousness of the Jews rejected Him, the stream of grace would find its channel elsewhere, God having prepared hearts to hail it with joy and thanksgiving, because it answered their misery and need — not the righteous. The channel of grace was dug by the need and the misery which the grace itself caused to be felt.

The life of this woman was shameful; but she was ashamed of it; at the least her position had isolated her, by separating her from the crowd that forgets itself in the tumult of social life. And there is no inward grief like an isolated heart; but Christ and grace more than meets it. Its isolation more than ceases. He was more isolated than she. She came alone to the well; she was not with the other women. Alone, she met with the Lord, by the wonderful guidance of God who brought her there. The disciples even must go away to make room for her. They knew nothing of this grace. They baptised indeed in the name of a Messiah in whom they believed. It was well. But God was there in grace — He who would judge the quick and the dead — and with Him a sinner in her sins. What a meeting! And God who had stooped so low as to be dependent on her for a little water to quench His thirst!

She had an ardent nature. She had sought for happiness; she had found misery. She lived in sin, and was weary of life. She was indeed in the lowest depths of misery. The ardor of her nature found sin no obstacle. She went on, alas! to the uttermost. The will, engaged in evil, feeds on sinful desires, and wastes itself without fruit. Nevertheless her soul was not without a sense of need. She thought of Jerusalem, she thought of Gerizim. She waited for the Messiah, who would tell them all things. Did this change her life? In no wise. Her life was shocking. When the Lord speaks of spiritual things, in language well suited to awaken the heart, directing her attention to heavenly things in a way that one would have thought it impossible to misunderstand, she cannot comprehend it. The natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit: they are spiritually discerned.

The novelty of the Lord's address excited her attention, but did not lead her thoughts beyond her waterpot, the symbol of her daily toil; although she saw that Jesus took the place of one greater than Jacob. What was to be done? God wrought — He wrought in grace, and in this poor woman.

Whatever the occasion might be as regards herself, it was He who had brought her thither. But she was unable to comprehend spiritual things though expressed in the plainest manner; for the Lord spoke of the water that springs up in the soul unto everlasting life. But as the human heart is ever revolving in its own circumstances and cares, her religious need was limited practically to the traditions by which her life, as regarded its religious thoughts and habits, was formed, leaving still a void that nothing could fill. What then was to be done? In what way can this grace act, when the heart does not understand the spiritual grace which the Lord brings? This is the second part of the marvelous instruction here. The Lord deals with her conscience. A word spoken by Him who searches the heart, searches her conscience: she is in the presence of a man who tells her all that ever she did. For, her conscience awakened by the word, and finding itself laid open to the eye of God, her whole life is before her.

And who is He that thus searches the heart? She feels that His word is the word of God. "Thou art a prophet." Intelligence in divine things comes by the conscience, not by the intellect. The soul and God are together, if we may so speak, whatever instrument is employed. She has everything to learn, no doubt; but she is in the presence of Him who teaches everything. What a step! What a change! What a new position! This soul, which saw no farther than her waterpot and felt her toil more than her sin, is there alone with the Judge of quick and dead — with God Himself. And in what manner? She knows not. She only felt that it was Himself in the power of His own word. But at least He did not despise her, as others did. Although she was alone, she was alone with Him. He had spoken to her of life — of the gift of God; He had told her that she had only to ask and have. She had understood nothing of His meaning; but it was not condemnation, it was grace — grace that stooped to her, that knew her sin and was not repelled by it, that asked her for water, that was above Jewish prejudice with regard to her, as well as the contempt of the humanly righteous — grace which did not conceal her sin from her, which made her feel that God knew it nevertheless, He who knew it was there without alarming her. Her sin was before God, but not in judgment.

Marvellous meeting of a soul with God, which the grace of God accomplishes by Christ! Not that she reasoned about all these things; but she was under the effect of their truth without accounting for it to herself;

for the word of God had reached her conscience, and she was in the presence of Him who had accomplished it, and He was meek and lowly, and glad to receive a little water at her hands. Her defilement did not defile Him. She could, in fact, trust in Him, without knowing why. It is thus that God acts. Grace inspires confidence — brings back the soul to God in peace, before it has any intelligent knowledge, or can explain it to itself. In this way, full of trust, she begins (it was the natural consequence) with the questions that filled her own heart; thus giving the Lord an opportunity of fully explaining the ways of God in grace. God had so ordered it; for the question was far from the sentiments which grace afterwards led her to. The Lord replies according to her condition: salvation was of the Jews. They were the people of God. Truth was with them, and not with the Samaritans who worshipped they knew not what. But God put all that aside. It was now neither at Gerizim nor at Jerusalem, that they should worship the Father who manifested Himself in the Son. God was a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Moreover the Father sought such worshippers. That is to say, the worship of their hearts must answer to the nature of God, to the grace of the Father who had sought them.* Thus true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Jerusalem and Samaria disappear entirely — have no place before such a revelation of the Father in grace. God no longer hid Himself; He was revealed perfectly in light. The perfect grace of the Father wrought, in order to make Him known, by the grace that brought souls to Him.

[* It will be found in John's writings that, when responsibility is spoken of, God is the word used; when grace to us, the Father and the Son. When indeed it is goodness (God's character in Christ) towards the world, then God is spoken of.]

Now the woman was not yet brought to Him; but, as we have seen in the case of the disciples and of John the Baptist, a glorious revelation of Christ acts upon the soul where it is, and brings the Person of Jesus into connection with the need already felt. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh; and when he is come, he will tell us all things." Small as her intelligence might be, and unable as she was to understand what Jesus had told her, His love meets her where she can receive blessing and life; and He replies, "I, that speak unto thee, am he." The work was done: the Lord was received. A poor Samaritan sinner receives the Messiah of Israel, whom the priests and the Pharisees had rejected from among the

people. The moral effect upon the woman is evident. She forgets her waterpot, her toil, her circumstances. She is engrossed by this new object that is revealed to her soul — by Christ; so engrossed that, without thinking, she becomes a preacher; that is, she proclaims the Lord in the fullness of her heart and with perfect simplicity. He had told her all that she had ever done. She does not think at that moment of what it was. Jesus had told it her; and the thought of Jesus takes away the bitterness of the sin. The sense of His goodness removes the guile of heart that seeks to conceal its sin. In a word, her heart is entirely filled with Christ Himself. Many believed in Him through her declaration — "He has told me all that ever I did"; many more, when they had heard Him. His own word carried with it a stronger conviction, as more immediately connected with His Person.

Meanwhile the disciples come, and — naturally — marvel at His talking with the woman. Their Master, the Messiah — they understood this; but the grace of God manifested in the flesh was still beyond their thoughts. The work of this grace was the meat of Jesus, and that in the lowliness of obedience as sent of God. He was taken up with it, and, in the perfect humility of obedience, it was His joy and His food to do His Father's will, and to finish His work. And the case of this poor woman had a voice that filled His heart with deep joy, wounded as it was in this world, because He was love. If the Jews rejected Him, still the fields in which grace sought its fruits for the everlasting granary were white already to harvest. He, therefore, who labored should not fail of his wages, nor of the joy of having such fruit unto life eternal. Nevertheless, even the apostles were but reapers where others had sown. The poor woman was a proof of this. Christ, present and revealed, met the need which the testimony of the prophet had awakened. Thus (while exhibiting a grace which revealed the love of the Father, of God the Savior, and coming out, consequently, from the pale of the Jewish system) He fully recognised the faithful service of His laborers in former days, the prophets who, by the Spirit of Christ from the beginning of the world, had spoken of the Redeemer, of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. The sowers and the reapers should rejoice together in the fruit of their labors.

But what a picture is all this of the purpose of grace, and of its mighty and living fullness in the Person of Christ, of the free gift of God, and of the

incapability of the spirit of man to apprehend it, preoccupied and blinded as he is by present things, seeing nothing beyond the life of nature, although suffering from the consequences of his sin! At the same time, we see that it is in the humiliation, the deep abasement, of the Messiah, of Jesus, that God Himself is manifested in this grace. It is this that breaks down the barriers, and gives free course to the torrent of grace from on high. We see, also, that conscience is the doorway of understanding in the things of God. We are brought truly into relationship with God when He searches the heart. This is always the case. We are then in the truth. Moreover God thus manifests Himself, and the grace and love of the Father. He seeks worshippers, and that, according to this double revelation of Himself, however great His patience may be with those who do not see farther than the first step of the promises of God. If Jesus is received, there is a thorough change; the work of conversion is wrought; there is faith. At the same time what a divine picture of our Jesus — humbled, indeed, but even thereby the manifestation of God in love, the Son of the Father, He who knows the Father, and accomplishes His work! What a glorious and boundless scene opens before the soul that is admitted to see and to know Him!

The whole range of grace is open to us here in His work and its divine extent, in that which regards its application to the individual, and the personal intelligence we may have respecting it. It is not precisely pardon, nor redemption, nor the assembly. It is grace flowing in the Person of Christ; and the conversion of the sinner, in order that he may enjoy it in himself, and be capable of knowing God and of worshipping the Father of grace. But how entirely have we broken out in principle from the narrow limits of Judaism!

Nevertheless in His personal ministry, the Lord, always faithful, putting Himself aside in order to glorify His Father by obeying Him, repairs to the sphere of labor appointed Him of God. He leaves the Jews, for no prophet is received in his own country, and goes into Galilee, among the despised of His people, the poor of the flock, where obedience, grace, and the counsels of God alike placed Him. In that sense, He did not forsake His people, perverse as they were. There He works a miracle which expresses the effect of His grace in connection with the believing remnant of Israel, feeble as their faith might be. He comes again to the place where He had

turned the water of purification into the wine of joy (“which cheereth God and man”). By that miracle He had, in figure, displayed the power which should deliver the people, and by which, being received, He would establish the fullness of joy in Israel, creating by that power the good wine of the nuptials of Israel with their God. Israel rejected it all. The Messiah was not received. He retired among the poor of the flock in Galilee, after having shown to Samaria (in passing) the grace of the Father, which went beyond all promises to, and dealings with, the Jew, and in the Person and the humiliation of Christ led converted souls to worship the Father (outside all Jewish system, true or false) in spirit and in truth; and there, in Galilee, He works a second miracle in the midst of Israel, where He still labors, according to His Father’s will, that is to say, wherever there is faith; not yet, perhaps, in His power to raise the dead, but to heal and save the life of that which was ready to perish. He fulfilled the desire of that faith, and restored the life of one who was at the point of death. It was this, in fact, which He was doing in Israel while here below. These two great truths were set forth — that which He was going to do according to the purposes of God the Father, as being rejected; and that which He was doing at the time for Israel, according to the faith He found among them.

In the chapters that follow we shall find the rights and the glory shown forth that attach to His Person; the rejection of His word and of His work; the sure salvation of the remnant, and of all His sheep wherever they may be. Afterwards — acknowledged by God, as manifested on earth, the Son of God, of David, and of man — that which He will do when gone away, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, are unfolded; also the position in which He placed the disciples before the Father, and with regard to Himself. And then — after the history of Gethsemane, the giving of His own life, His death as giving His life for us — the whole result, in the ways of God, until His return, is briefly given in the chapter that closes the book.

We may go more rapidly through the chapters till the tenth, not as of little importance — far from it — but as containing some great principles which may be pointed out, each in its place, without requiring much explanation.

CHAPTER 5 contrasts the quickening power of Christ, the power and the right of giving life to the dead, with the powerlessness of legal ordinances. They required strength in the person that was to profit by them. Christ

brought with Him the power that was to heal, and indeed to quicken. Further, all judgment is committed to Him, so that those who had received life would not come into judgment. The end of the chapter sets forth the testimonies that have been born to Him, and the guilt therefore of those who would not come to Him to have life. One is sovereign grace, the other responsibility because life was there. To have life His divine power was needed; but in rejecting Him, in refusing to come unto Him that they might have life, they did so in spite of the most positive proofs.

Let us go a little into the details. The poor man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years was absolutely hindered, by the nature of his disease, from profiting by means that required strength to use them. This is the character of sin, on the one hand, and of law on the other. Some remains of blessing still existed among the Jews. Angels, ministers of that dispensation, still wrought among the people. Jehovah did not leave Himself without testimony. But strength was needed to profit by this instance of their ministry. That which the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, God has done through Jesus. The impotent man had desire, but not strength; to will was present with him, but no power to perform. The Lord's question brings this out. A single word from Christ does everything. "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." Strength is imparted. The man rises, and goes away carrying his bed.*

[* Christ brings the strength with Him which the law requires in man himself to profit by it.]

It was the Sabbath — an important circumstance here, holding a prominent place in this interesting scene. The Sabbath was given as a token of the covenant between the Jews and the Lord.* But it had been proved that the law did not give God's rest to man. The power of a new life was needed; grace was needed, that man might be in relationship with God. The healing of this poor man was an operation of this same grace, of this same power, but wrought in the midst of Israel. The pool of Bethesda supposed power in man; the act of Jesus employed power, in grace, on behalf of one of the Lord's people in distress. Therefore, as dealing with His people in government, He says to the man, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." It was Jehovah acting by His grace and blessing among His people; but it was in temporal things, the tokens of His favor and lovingkindness, and in connection with His government in Israel. Still it

was divine power and grace. Now, the man told the Jews that it was Jesus. They rise up against Him under the pretense of a violation of the Sabbath. The Lord's answer is deeply affecting, and full of instruction — a whole revelation. It declares the relationship, now openly revealed by His coming, that existed between Himself (the Son) and His Father. It shows — and what depths of grace! — that neither the Father nor Himself could find their Sabbath** in the midst of misery and of the sad fruits of sin. Jehovah in Israel might impose the Sabbath as an obligation by the law, and make it a token of the previous truth that His people should enter into the rest of God. But, in fact, when God was truly known, there was no rest in existing things; nor was this all — He wrought in grace, His love could not rest in misery. He had instituted a rest in connection with the creation, when it was very good. Sin, corruption, and misery had entered into it. God, the holy and the just, no longer found a Sabbath in it, and man did not really enter into God's rest (compare Hebrews 4). Of two things, one: either God must, in justice, destroy the guilty race; or — and this is what He did, according to His eternal purposes — He must begin to work in grace, according to the redemption which the state of man required — a redemption in which all His glory is unfolded. In a word, He must begin to work again in love. Thus the Lord says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God cannot be satisfied where there is sin. He cannot rest with misery in sight. He has no Sabbath, but still works in grace. How divine an answer to their wretched cavils!

[* The Sabbath is introduced, whatever new institution or arrangement is established under the law. And in truth, a part in the rest of God is, in certain aspects, the highest of our privileges (see Hebrews 4). The Sabbath was the close of the first or this creation, and will be so when fulfilled. Our rest is in the new one, and that not in the first man's creation state but risen, Christ the second Man being its beginning and head. Hence the first day of the week.]

[** God's Sabbath is a Sabbath of love and holiness.]

Another truth came out from that which the Lord said: He put Himself on an equality with His Father. But the Jews, jealous for their ceremonies — for that which distinguished them from other nations — saw nothing of the glory of Christ, and seek to kill Him, treating Him as a blasphemer. This gives Jesus occasion to lay open the whole truth on this point. He was not like an independent being with equal rights, another God who acted on His

own account, which, moreover, is impossible. There cannot be two supreme and omnipotent beings. The Son is in full union with the Father, does nothing without the Father, but does whatsoever He sees the Father do. There is nothing that the Father does which He does not in communion with the Son; and greater proofs of this should yet be seen, that they might marvel. This last sentence of the Lord's words, as well as the whole of this Gospel, shows that, while revealing absolutely that He and the Father are one, He reveals it, and speaks of it as in a position in which He could be seen of men. The thing of which He speaks is in God; the position in which He speaks of it is a position taken, and, in a certain sense, inferior. We see everywhere that He is equal to, and one with, the Father. We see that He receives all from the Father, and does all after the Father's mind. (This is shown very remarkably in chapter 17). It is the Son, but the Son manifested in the flesh, acting in the mission which the Father sent Him to fulfill.

Two things are spoken of in this chapter (v. 21, 22) which demonstrate the glory of the Son. He quickens and He judges. It is not healing that is in question — a work which, at bottom, springs from the same source, and has its occasion in the same evil: but the giving of life in a manner evidently divine. As the Father raises the dead and quickens them, so the Son quickens whom He will. Here we have the first proof of His divine rights, He gives life, and He gives it to whom He will. But, being incarnate, He may be personally dishonored, disallowed, despised of men. Consequently all judgment is committed unto Him, the Father judging no man, in order that all, even those who have rejected the Son, should honor Him, even as they honor the Father whom they own as God. If they refuse when He acts in grace, they shall be compelled when He acts in judgment. In life, we have communion by the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son (and quickening or giving life is the work alike of the Father and the Son); but in the judgment, unbelievers will have to do with the Son of man whom they have rejected. The two things are quite distinct. He whom Christ has quickened will not need to be compelled to honor Him by undergoing judgment. Jesus will not call into judgment one whom He has saved by quickening him.

How may we know, then, to which of these two classes we belong? The Lord (praised be His name!) replies, he that hears His word, and believes

Him who sent Him (believes the Father by hearing Christ), has everlasting life (such is the quickening power of His word), and shall not come into judgment. He is passed from death into life. Simple and wonderful testimony!* The judgment will glorify the Lord in the case of those who have despised Him here. The possession of eternal life, that they may not come into judgment, is the portion of those who believe.

[* Remark how full the bearing of this is. If they do not come into judgment to settle their state, as man would put it, they are shown to be wholly dead in sin. Grace in Christ does not contemplate an uncertain state which judgment will determine. It gives life and secures from judgment. But while He judges as Son of man according to the deeds done in the body, He shows us here that all were dead in sin to begin with.]

The Lord then points out two distinct periods, in which the power that the Father committed to Him as having come down to the earth, is to be exercised. The hour was coming — was already come — in which the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and those that heard should live. This is the communication of spiritual life by Jesus, the Son of God, to man, who is dead by sin, and that by means of the word which he should hear. For the Father has given to the Son, to Jesus, thus manifested on earth, to have life in Himself (compare 1 John 1:1, 2). He has also given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man. For the kingdom and the judgment, according to the counsels of God, belong to Him as Son of man — in that character in which He was despised and rejected when He came in grace.

This passage also shows us that, although He was the eternal Son, one with the Father, He is always looked upon as manifested here in the flesh, and, therefore, as receiving all from the Father. It is thus that we have seen Him at the well of Samaria — the God who gave, but the One who asked the poor woman to give Him to drink.

Jesus, then, quickened souls at that time. He still quickens. They were not to marvel. A work, more wonderful in the eyes of men, should be accomplished. All those that were in the grave should come forth. This is the second period of which He speaks. In the one He quickens souls; in the other, He raises up bodies from death. The one has lasted during the ministry of Jesus and 1800 years since His death; the other is not yet come, but during its continuance two things will take place. There will be a

resurrection of those who have done good (this will be a resurrection of life, the Lord will complete His quickening work), and there will be a resurrection of those who have done evil (this will be a resurrection for their judgment). This judgment will be according to the mind of God, and not according to any separate personal will of Christ. Thus far it is sovereign power, and as regards life sovereign Grace — He quickens whom He will. What follows is man's responsibility as regards the obtaining eternal life. It was there in Jesus, and they would not come to Him to have it.

The Lord goes on to point out to them four testimonies rendered to His glory and to His Person, which left them without excuse: John, His own works, His Father, and the scriptures. Nevertheless, while pretending to receive the latter, as finding in them eternal life, they would not come to Him that they might have life. Poor Jews! The Son came in the name of the Father, and they would not receive Him; another shall come in his own name, and him they will receive. This better suits the heart of man. They sought honor from one another: how could they believe? Let us remember this. God does not accommodate Himself to the pride of man — does not arrange the truth so as to feed it. Jesus knew the Jews. Not that He would accuse them to the Father: Moses, in whom they trusted, would do that; for if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Christ. But if they did not credit the writings of Moses, how would they believe the words of a despised Savior?

In result, the Son of God gives life, and He executes judgment. In the judgment that He executes, the testimony which had been rendered to His Person leaves man without excuse on the ground of his own responsibility. In chapter 5 Jesus is the Son of God who, with the Father, gives life, and as Son of man judges. In chapter 6 He is the object of faith, as come down from heaven and dying. He just alludes to His going on high as Son of man.

In **CHAPTER 6**, then, it is the Lord come down from heaven, humbled and put to death, not now as the Son of God, one with the Father, the source of life; but as He who, although He was Jehovah and at the same time the Prophet and the King, would take the place of Victim, and that of Priest in heaven: in His incarnation, the bread of life; dead, the true nourishment of believers; ascended again to heaven, the living object of their faith. But He

only glances at this last feature: the doctrine of the chapter is that which goes before. It is not the divine power that quickens, but the Son of man come in flesh, the object of faith, and so the means of life; and, though, as plainly declared by the calling of grace, yet it is not the divine side, quickening whom He will, but faith in us laying hold of Him. In both He acts independently of the limits of Judaism. He quickens whom He will, and comes to give life to the world.

It was on the occasion of the Passover, a type which the Lord was to fulfill by the death of which He spoke. Observe, here, that all these chapters present the Lord, and the truth that reveals Him, in contrast with Judaism, which He forsook and set aside. Chapter 5 was the impotence of the law and its ordinances; here it is the blessings promised by the Lord to the Jews on earth (Psalm 132:15), and the characters of Prophet and King fulfilled by the Messiah on earth in connection with the Jews, that are seen in contrast with the new position and the doctrine of Jesus. That of which I here speak characterises every distinct subject in this Gospel.

First, Jesus blesses the people, according to the promise of that which Jehovah should do, given them in Psalm 132, for He was Jehovah. On this, the people acknowledge Him to be “that Prophet,” and desire by force to make Him their King. But this He declines now — could not take it in this carnal way. Jesus leaves them, and goes up by Himself into a mountain. This was, figuratively, His position as Priest on high. These are the three characters of the Messiah in respect of Israel; but the last has full and special application to the saints now also, as walking on the earth, who continue as to this the position of the remnant. The disciples enter a ship, and, without Him, are tossed upon the waves. Darkness comes on (this will happen to the remnant down here), and Jesus is away. Nevertheless He rejoins them, and they receive Him joyfully. Immediately the ship is at the place to which they were going. A striking picture of the remnant journeying on earth during the absence of Christ, and their every wish fully and immediately satisfied — full blessing and rest — when He rejoins them.*

[* The direct application of this is to the remnant; but then, as hinted in the text, we, as to our path on earth, are, so to speak, the continuation of that remnant, and Christ is on high for us, while we are on the waves below. The subsequent part of the chapter, of the bread of life, is properly for us. The world, not Israel, is in question. Indeed though Christ is Aaron within the

veil for Israel, while He is there the saints have properly their heavenly character.]

This part of the chapter, having shown us the Lord as already the Prophet here below, and refusing to be made King, and also that which will yet take place when He returns to the remnant on earth — the historical framework of what He was and will be — the remainder of the chapter gives us that which He is meanwhile to faith, His true character, the purpose of God in sending Him, outside Israel, and in connection with sovereign grace. The people seek Him. The true work, which God owns, is to believe in Him whom He has sent. This is that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which is given by the Son of man (it is in this character we find Jesus here, as in chapter 5 it was the Son of God), for He it is whom God the Father has sealed. Jesus had taken this place of Son of man in humiliation here below. He went to be baptised of John the Baptist; and there, in this character, the Father sealed Him, the Holy Ghost coming down upon Him.

The multitude ask Him for a proof like the manna. He was Himself the proof — the true manna. Moses did not give the heavenly bread of life. Their fathers died in the very wilderness in which they had eaten the manna. The Father now gave them the true bread from heaven. Here, observe, it is not the Son of God who gives, and who is the sovereign Giver of life to whom He will. He is the object set before faith; He is to be fed upon. Life is found in Him; he that eats Him shall live by Him, and shall never hunger. But the multitude did not believe in Him; in fact, the mass of Israel, as such, were not in question. Those that the Father gave Him should come unto Him. He was there the passive object, so to say, of faith. It is no longer to whom He will, but to receive those whom the Father brought Him. Therefore, be it who it might, He would in no wise cast them out: enemy, scoffer, Gentile, they would not come if the Father had not sent them. The Messiah was there to do His Father's will, and whomsoever the Father brought Him He would receive for life eternal (compare chap. 5:21). The Father's will had these two characters. Of all whom the Father should give Him, He would lose none. Precious assurance! The Lord saves assuredly to the end those whom the Father has given Him; and then every one that should see the Son and believe on Him should have everlasting life. This is the gospel for every soul, as the other is that which infallibly assures the salvation of every believer. But this is

not all. The subject of hope was not now the fulfillment on earth of the promises made to the Jew, but being raised from the dead, having part in everlasting life — in resurrection at the last day (that is, of the age of the law in which they were). He did not crown the dispensation of the law; He was to bring in a new dispensation, and with it resurrection. The Jews* murmur at His saying that He came down from heaven. Jesus replies by the testimony that their difficulty was easy to be understood: no one could come unto Him except the Father brought him. It was grace that produced this effect; whether they were Jews or not made no difference. It was a question of eternal life, of being raised from the dead by Him; not of performing the promises as Messiah, but of bringing in the life of a widely different world to be enjoyed by faith — the Father's grace having led the soul to find it in Jesus. Moreover, the prophets had said they should all be taught of God. Every one, therefore, who had learned of the Father came unto Him. No man, doubtless, had seen the Father excepting Him who was of God — Jesus; He had seen the Father. He that believed in Him was already in possession of eternal life, for He was the bread come down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof and not die.

[* In John, the Jews are always distinguished from the multitude. They are the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea. It would, perhaps, be easier to understand this Gospel, if the words were rendered "those of Judea," which is the true sense.]

But this was not only by the incarnation, but by the death of Him who came down from heaven. He would give His life; His blood should be taken from the body which He had assumed. They should eat His flesh; they should drink His blood. Death should be the believer's life. And, in fact, it is in a dead Savior that we see the sin taken away which He bore for us, and death for us is death to the sinful nature in which evil and our separation from God lay. There He made an end of sin — He who knew no sin. Death, which sin brought in, puts away the sin that attached to the life, which there comes to its end. Not that Christ had any sin in His own Person; but He took sin, He was made sin, on the cross, for us. And he who is dead is justified from sin. I feed, therefore, on the death of Christ. Death is mine; it is become life. It separates me from sin, from death, from the life in which I was separated from God. In it sin and death have finished their course. They were attached to my life. Christ, in grace, has born them, and He has given His flesh for the life of the world; and I am

freed from them; and I feed on the infinite grace that is in Him, who has accomplished this. The expiation is complete, and I live, being happily dead to all that separated me from God. It is death as fulfilled in Him that I feed upon, first for me, and entering withal into it by faith. He needed to live as man in order to die, and He has given His life. Thus His death is efficacious; His love infinite; the expiation total, absolute, perfect. That which was between me and God exists no longer, for Christ died, and it all passed away with His life here on earth — life as He had it before expiring on the cross. Death could not hold Him. To perform this work, He needed to possess a power of divine life which death could not touch; but this is not the truth expressly taught in the chapter before us, although it is implied.

In speaking to the multitude, the Lord, while rebuking them for their unbelief, presents Himself, come in the flesh, as the object of their faith at that moment (v. 32-35). To the Jews, in laying open the doctrine, He repeats that He is the living bread come down from heaven, of which if any man eat he should live for ever. But He makes them understand that they could not stop there — they must receive His death. He does not say here, “he that eateth me,” but it was to eat His flesh and drink His blood, to enter fully into the thought — the reality — of His death; to receive a dead (not a living) Messiah, dead for men, dead before God. He does not exist now as a dead Christ; but we must acknowledge, realise, feed upon, His death — identify ourselves with it before God, participating in it by faith, or we have no life in us.*

[* This truth is of vast importance as regards the sacramental question. Sacraments are declared by the Puseyite school to be the continuation of the incarnation. This is in every respect error, and, in truth, a denial of the faith. Both sacraments signify death. We are baptised to Christ’s death; and the Lord’s supper is confessedly emblematic of His death. I say “denial of the faith”; because, as the Lord shows, if they do not eat His flesh and blood, they have no life in them. As incarnate Christ is alone. His presence in flesh on earth showed that God and sinful men could not be united. His presence as man in the world resulted in His rejection — proved the impossibility of union or fruit on that ground. Redemption must come in, His blood be shed, Himself lifted up from the earth, and so draw men to Him: death must come in, or He abode alone. They could not eat the bread unless they ate the flesh and drank the blood. A meat-offering without a bloody offering was null, or rather a Cain offering. Further, the Lord’s supper presents a dead Christ, and a dead Christ only — the blood apart from the body. No such Christ exists; and therefore transubstantiation and consubstantiation and all

such thoughts are a blundering fable. We are united to a glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost; and we celebrate that most precious death upon which all our blessing is founded, through which we got there. We do it in remembrance of Him, and in our hearts feed on Him, so given, and shedding His blood.]

Thus it was for the world. Thus they should live, not of their own life, but by Christ, through feeding on Him. Here He returns to His own Person, faith in His death being established. Moreover, they should dwell in Him (v. 56) should be in Him before God, according to all His acceptance before God, all the efficacy of His work in dying.* And Christ should dwell in them according to the power and grace of that life in which He had gained the victory over death, and in which, having gained it, He now lives. As the living Father had sent Him, and He lived, not by an independent life which had not the Father for its object or source, but by reason of the Father, so he that thus ate Him should live because of Him.**

[* Abiding imports constancy of dependence, confidence, and living by the life in which Christ lives. “Dwelling” and “abiding,” though the word be changed in English, are the same in the original: so in chapter 15 and elsewhere.]

[** It may be well to note that in the Greek in this passage, in verses 51 and 53, eating is in the aorist tense — whosoever has done so. In verses 54, 56 and 57, it is the present tense — a present continuous action.]

Afterwards, in reply to those who murmured at this fundamental truth, the Lord appeals to His ascension. He had come down from heaven — this was His doctrine; He would ascend thither again. Material flesh profited nothing. It was the Spirit who gave life, by realising in the soul the mighty truth of that which Christ was, and of His death. But He returns to that which He had told them before; in order to come to Him thus revealed in truth, they must be led of the Father. There is such a thing as faith that is ignorant perhaps, although through grace real. Such was that of the disciples. They knew that He, and He only, had the words of eternal life. It was not only that He was the Messiah, which they indeed believed, but His words had laid hold of their hearts with the power of the divine life which they revealed, and through grace communicated. Thus they acknowledged Him as the Son of God, not only officially, so to speak, but according to the power of divine life. He was the Son of the living God. Nevertheless there was one among them who was of the devil.

Jesus therefore, come down to earth, put to death, ascending again to heaven, is the doctrine of this chapter. As come down and put to death, He is the food of faith during His absence on high. For it is on His death we must feed, in order to dwell spiritually in Him and He in us.

In **CHAPTER 7** His brethren after the flesh, still sunk in unbelief, would have Him show Himself to the world, if He did these great things; but the time for this was not yet come. At the fulfillment of the type of the feast of tabernacles He will do so. The passover had its antitype at the cross, pentecost at the descent of the Holy Ghost. The feast of tabernacles, as yet, has had no fulfillment. It was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage, and Israel joyfully commemorated, in the land, their pilgrimage before entering on the rest which God had given them in Canaan. Thus the fulfillment of this type will be when, after the execution of judgment (whether in discerning between the wicked and the good, or simply in vengeance*), Israel, restored to their land, shall be in possession of all their promised blessing. At that time Jesus will show Himself to the world; but at the time of which we are speaking His hour was not yet come. Meanwhile, having gone away (v. 33, 34), He gives the Holy Ghost to believers (v. 38, 39).

[* The harvest is discriminating judgment, there are tares and wheat. The winepress is the destructive judgment of vengeance. In the former there will be two in one bed, one taken and another left, but the winepress is simple wrath, as Isaiah 63. So in Revelation 14.]

Remark here, there is no pentecost brought in. We pass from the passover in chapter 6 to the tabernacles in chapter 7, in lieu of which believers would receive the Holy Ghost. As I have remarked, this Gospel treats of a divine Person on earth, not of the man in heaven. The coming of the Holy Ghost is spoken of as substituted for the last or eighth day of the feast of tabernacles. Pentecost supposes Jesus on high.

But He presents the Holy Ghost in such a way as to make Him the hope of faith at the time in which He spoke, if God created a sense of need in the soul. If any one thirsted, let him come to Jesus and drink. Not only should his thirst be quenched, but from the inner man of his soul should flow forth streams of living water. So that coming to Him by faith to satisfy the need of their soul, not only should the Holy Ghost be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life, but living water should also

flow forth from them in abundance to refresh all those who thirsted. Observe here, that Israel drank water in the wilderness before they could keep the feast of tabernacles. But they only drank. There was no well in them. The water flowed from the rock. Under grace every believer is not doubtless a source in himself; but the full stream flows from him. This however would only take place when Jesus was glorified, and in those who were already believers, previous to their receiving it. What is spoken of here is not a work that quickens. It is a gift to those who believe. Moreover at the feast of tabernacles Jesus will show Himself to the world; but this is not the subject of which the Holy Ghost thus received is especially the witness. He is given in connection with the glory of Jesus, while He is hidden from the world. It was also on the eighth day of the feast, the sign of a portion beyond the sabbath rest of this world, and which began another period — a new scene of glory.

Observe also that, practically, although the Holy Ghost is presented here as power acting in blessing outside the one in whom He dwells, His presence in the believer is the fruit of a personal thirst, of need felt in the soul — need for which the soul had sought an answer in Christ. He who thirsts, thirsts for himself. The Holy Ghost in us, revealing Christ, becomes, by dwelling in us when we have believed, a river in us, and thus for others.

The spirit of the Jews plainly showed itself. They sought to kill the Lord; and He tells them that His relationship with them on earth would soon be ended (v. 33). They need not hasten so much to get rid of Him: soon they would seek Him and not be able to find Him. He was going away to His Father.

We see clearly the difference here between the multitude and the Jews — two parties always distinguished from each other in this Gospel. The former did not understand why He spoke of the desire to kill Him. Those of Judea were astonished at His boldness, knowing that at Jerusalem they were conspiring against His life. His time was not yet come. They send officers to take Him; and these return, struck with His discourse, without laying hands on Him. The Pharisees are angry, and express their contempt for the people. Nicodemus hazards a word of justice according to the law, and brings their contempt on himself. But each one goes away to his home.

Jesus, who had no home until He went back to heaven whence He came, goes to the Mount of Olives, the witness of His agony, His ascension, and His return — a place which He habitually frequented, when at Jerusalem, during the time of His ministry on earth.

The contrast of this chapter with Judaism, even with its best hopes in the future that God has prepared for His earthly people, is too evident to be dwelt upon. This Gospel, throughout, reveals Jesus outside all that belonged to that earthly system. In chapter 6 it was death here below on the cross. Here it is glory in heaven, the Jews being rejected, and the Holy Ghost given to the believer. In chapter 5 He gives life, as the Son of God; in chapter 6 He is the same Son, but not as divinely quickening and judging as being Son of man, but as come down from heaven, the Son in humiliation here, but the true bread from heaven which the Father gave. But in that lowly One, they must see the Son, to live. Then, as so come, and having taken the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He (v. 53) humbles Himself, and suffers on the cross, as Son of man; in chapter 7 He, when glorified, sends the Holy Ghost. Chapter 5 displays His titles of personal glory; chapters 6, 7, His work and the giving of the Spirit to believers consequent on His present glory in heaven,* to which the presence of the Holy Ghost answers on earth. In chapters 8, 9** we shall find His testimony and His works rejected, and the question decided between Him and the Jews. It will be observed also, that chapters 5 and 6 treat of the life. In chapter 5 it is given sovereignly and divinely by Him who possesses it; in chapter 6, the soul, receiving and being occupied with Jesus by faith, finds life, and feeds upon Him by the grace of the Father: two things distinct in their nature — God gives; man, by grace, feeds. On the other hand, chapter 7 is Christ's going to Him that sent Him, and meanwhile the Holy Ghost, who unfolds the glory He is gone into, in us and by us, in its heavenly character. In chapter 5 Christ is the Son of God, who quickens in abstract divine power and will, what He is, not the place He is in, but alone judges, being Son of man; in chapter 6, the same Son, but come down from heaven, the object of faith in His humiliation, then the Son of man, dying, and returning again; in chapter 7, not yet revealed to the world. The Holy Ghost is given instead when He is glorified above, the Son of man in heaven — at least contemplating His going there.

[* This glory, however, is only supposed, not taught. He cannot be at the feast of tabernacles, Israel's rest, nor show Himself, as He will then, to the world; but gives the Holy Ghost instead. This we know supposes His present position, just referred to in chapter 6.]

[** The doctrine of chapter 9 continues to the 30th verse of chapter 10.]

In **CHAPTER 8**, as we have said, the word of Jesus is rejected; and, in chapter 9, His works. But there is much more than that. The personal glories of chapter 1 are reproduced and developed in all these chapters separately (leaving out for the moment from verse 36 to 51 of chapter 1): we have found again the verses 14-34 in chapters 5, 6, and 7. The Holy Ghost now returns to the subject of the first verses in the chapter. Christ is the Word; He is the life, and the life which is the light of men. The three chapters that I have now pointed out speak of what He is in grace for men, while still declaring His right to judge. The Spirit here (in chap. 8) sets before us that which He is in Himself, and that which He is to men (thus putting them to the test, so that in rejecting Him they reject themselves, and show themselves to be reprobate).

Let us now consider our chapter. The contrast with Judaism is evident. They bring a woman whose guilt is undeniable. The Jews, in their wickedness, bring her forward in the hope of confounding the Lord. If He condemned her, He was not a Savior — the law could do as much. If He let her go, He despised and disallowed the law. This was clever; but what avails cleverness in the presence of God who searches the heart? The Lord allows them to commit themselves thoroughly by not answering them for awhile. Probably they thought He was entangled. At last He says, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone." Convicted by their conscience, without honesty and without faith, they quit the scene of their confusion, separating from each other, each caring for himself, caring for character not conscience, and departing from Him who had convicted them; he who had the most reputation to save going out first. What a sorrowful picture! What a mighty word! Jesus and the woman are left together alone. Who can stand unconvicted in His presence? With regard to the woman, whose guilt was known, He does not go beyond the Jewish position, except to preserve the rights of His own Person in grace.

This is not the same thing as in Luke 7, plenary pardon and salvation. The others could not condemn her — He would not. Let her go, and let her sin

no more. It is not the grace of salvation that the Lord exhibits here. He does not judge, He was not come for this; but the efficacy of the pardon is not the subject of these chapters — it is the glory here of His Person, in contrast with all that is of the law. He is the light, and by the power of His word He entered as light into the conscience of those who had brought the woman.

For the Word was light; but that was not all. Coming into the world, He was (chap. 1:4-10) the light. Now it was the life that was the light of men. It was not a law that made demands, and condemned; or that promised life on obedience to its precepts. It was the Life itself which was there in His Person, and that life was the light of men, convincing them, and, perhaps, judging them; but it was as light. Thus Jesus says herein contrast with the law, brought by those who could not stand before the light — "I am the light of the world" (not merely of the Jews). For in this Gospel we have what Christ is essentially in His Person, whether as God, the Son come from the Father, or Son of man — not what God was in special dealings with the Jews. Hence He was the object of faith in His Person, not in dispensational dealings. Whoso followed Him should have the light of life. But it was in Him, in His Person, that it was found. And He could bear record of Himself, because, although He was a man there, in this world, He knew whence He came and whither He was going. It was the Son, who came from the Father and was returning to Him again. He knew it, and was conscious of it. His testimony, therefore, was not that of an interested person which one might hesitate to believe. There was, in proof that this man was the One whom He represented Himself to be, the testimony of the Son (His own), and the testimony of the Father. If they had known Him, they would have known the Father.

At that time — in spite of such testimony as this — no one laid hands on Him: His hour was not yet come. That only was wanting; for their opposition to God was certain, and known to Him. This opposition was plainly declared (v. 19-24); consequently, if they believed not, they would die in their sins. Nevertheless He tells them that they shall know who He is, when He shall have been rejected and lifted up on the cross, having taken a very different position as the Savior, rejected by the people and unknown of the world; when no longer presented to them as such, they should know that He was indeed the Messiah, and that He was the Son

who spoke to them from the Father. As He spake these words, many believed on Him. He declares to them the effect of faith, which gives occasion to the true position of the Jews being manifested with terrible precision. He declares that the truth would set them free, and that if the Son (who is the truth) should set them free, they would be free indeed. The truth sets free morally before God. The Son, by virtue of the rights that were necessarily His, and by inheritance in the house, would place them in it according to those rights, and that in the power of divine life come down from heaven — the Son of God with power as resurrection declared it. In this was the true setting free.

Piqued at the idea of bondage, which their pride could not bear, they declare themselves to be free, and never to have been in bondage to any one. In reply, the Lord shows that those who commit sin are the servants (slaves) of sin. Now, as being under the law, as being Jews, they were servants in the house: they should be sent away. But the Son had inalienable rights; He was of the house and would abide in it for ever. Under sin, and under the law, was the same thing for a child of Adam; he was a servant. The apostle shows this in Romans 6 (compare chaps. 7 and 8) and in Galatians 4 and 5. Moreover, they were neither really, nor morally, the children of Abraham before God, although they were so according to the flesh; for they sought to kill Jesus. They were not children of God; had they been, they would have loved Jesus who came from God. They were the children of the devil and would do his works.

Observe here, that to understand the meaning of the word is the way to apprehend the force of the words. One does not learn the definition of words and then the things; one learns the things, and then the meaning of the words is evident.

They begin to resist the testimony, conscious that He was making Himself greater than all those whom they had leant upon. They rail upon Him because of His words; and by their opposition the Lord is induced to explain Himself more clearly; until, having declared that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and the Jews applying this to His age as man, He announces positively that He is the One who calls Himself I am — the supreme name of God, that He is God Himself — He whom they pretended to know as having revealed Himself in the bush.

Wondrous revelation! A despised, rejected man, despised and rejected by men, contradicted, ill-treated, yet it was God Himself who was there. What a fact! What a total change! What a revelation to those who acknowledged Him, or who know Him! What a condition is theirs who have rejected Him, and that because their hearts were opposed to all that He was, for He did not fail to manifest Himself! What a thought, that God Himself has been here! Goodness itself! How everything vanishes before Him! — the law, man, his reasonings. Everything necessarily depends on this great fact. And, blessed be His name! this God is a Savior. We are indebted to the sufferings of Christ for knowing it. And note here, how the setting aside formal dispensations from God, if true, is by the revelation of Himself, and so introduces infinitely greater blessing.

But here He presents Himself as the Witness, the Word, the Word made flesh, the Son of God, but still the Word, God Himself. In the narrative at the beginning of the chapter He is a testimony to the conscience, the Word that searches and convicts. Verse 18, He bears testimony with the Father. Verse 26, He declares in the world that which He has received of the Father, and as taught of God He has spoken. Moreover the Father was with Him. Verses 32, 33, the truth was known by His word, and the truth made them free. Verse 47, He spoke the words of God. Verse 51, His word, being kept, preserved from death. Verse 58, it was God Himself, the Jehovah whom the fathers knew, that spoke.

Opposition arose from its being the word of truth (v. 45). Opposers were of the adversary. He was a murderer from the beginning, and they would follow him; but as the truth was the source of life, so that which characterised the adversary was, that he abode not in the truth: there is no truth in him. He is the father and the source of lies, so that, if falsehood speaks, it is one belonging to him that speaks. Sin was bondage, and they were in bondage by the law. (Truth, the Son Himself, made free.) But, more than that, the Jews were enemies, children of the enemy, and they would do his works, not believing the words of Christ because He spoke the truth. There is no miracle here; it is the power of the word, and the living word is God Himself: rejected by men, He is, as it were, compelled to speak the truth, to reveal Himself, hidden at once and manifested, as He was in the flesh — hidden as to His glory, manifested as to all that He is in His Person and in His grace.

In **CHAPTER 9** we come to the testimony of His works, but as down here as a man in lowliness. It is not the Son of God quickening whom He will as the Father, but by the operation of His grace down here, the eye opened to see in the lowly man the Son of God. In chapter 8 it is that which He is towards men; in chapter 9 it is that which He does in man, that man may see Him. Thus we shall find Him presented in His human character, and (the word being received) acknowledged to be the Son of God; and in this way the remnant separated, the sheep restored to the good Shepherd. He is the light of the world while He is in it; but where, through grace received in His humiliation, He communicated the power to see the light, and to see all things by it.

Observe here, that when it is the word (the manifestation in testimony of what Christ is), man is manifested as he is in himself, a child — in his nature — of the devil, who is a murderer and a liar from the beginning, the inveterate enemy of Him who can say, “I am.”* But when the Lord works, He produces something in man that he had not previously. He bestows sight on him, attaching him thus to the One who had enabled him to see. The Lord is not here understood or manifested in apparently as exalted a manner, because He comes down to the wants and circumstances of man, in order that He may be more closely known; but, in result, He brings the soul to the knowledge of His glorious Person. Only, instead of being the word and the testimony — the Word of God — to show as light what man is, He is the Son, one with the Father,** giving eternal life to His sheep, and preserving them in this grace for ever. For, as to the blessing that flows from thence, and the full doctrine of His true position with regard to the sheep in blessing, chapter 10 goes with chapter 9. Chapter 10 is the continuation of the discourse begun at the end of chapter 9.

[* Chapter 8 is practically chapter 1:5; only that there is, besides that, enmity, hostility against Him who was light.]

[** This distinction of grace and responsibility (in connection with the names Father and Son, and God) has been already noticed. See page 316.]

CHAPTER 9 opens with the case of a man that gives rise to a question from the disciples, in relation to the government of God in Israel. Was it his parents’ sin that brought this visitation on their child, according to the principles God had given them in Exodus? Or was it his own sin, known to God though not manifested to men, that had procured him this judgment?

The Lord replies, that the man's condition did not depend on the government of God with respect to the sin either of himself or of his parents. His case was but the misery which gave room for the mighty operation of God in grace. It is the contrast that we have continually seen; but here it is in order to set forth the works of God.

God acts. It is not only that which He is, nor even simply an object of faith. The presence of Jesus on earth made it day. It was therefore the time of work to do the works of Him that sent Him. But He who works here, works by means that teach us the union which exists between an object of faith and the power of God who works. He makes clay with His spittle and the earth, and puts it on the eyes of the man who was born blind. As a figure, it pointed to the humanity of Christ in earthly humiliation and lowliness, presented to the eyes of men, but with divine efficacy of life in Him. Did they see any more? If possible, their eyes were the more completely closed. Still the object was there; it touched their eyes, and they could not see it. The blind man then washes in the pool that was called "Sent," and is enabled to see clearly. The power of the Spirit and of the word, making Christ known as the One sent by the Father, gives him sight. It is the history of divine teaching in the heart of man. Christ, as man, touches us. We are absolutely blind, we see nothing. The Spirit of God acts, Christ being there before our eyes; and we see plainly.

The people are astonished and know not what to think. The Pharisees oppose. Again the Sabbath is in question. They find (it is always the story) good reasons for condemning Him who bestowed sight, in their pretended zeal for God's glory. There was positive proof that the man was born blind, that he now saw, that Jesus had done it. The parents testify to the only thing that was important on their part. As to who it was that had given him sight, others knew more than they; but their fears bring out in evidence, that it was a settled thing to cast out, not only Jesus, but all who should confess Him. Thus the Jewish leaders brought the thing to a decisive point. They not only rejected Christ, but they cast out from the privileges of Israel, as to their ordinary worship, those who confessed Him. Their hostility distinguished the manifested remnant and put them apart; and that, by using confession of Christ as a touchstone. This was deciding their own fate, and judging their own condition.

Observe, that proofs here went for nothing; the Jews, the parents, the Pharisees, had them before their eyes. Faith came through being personally the subject of this mighty operation of God, who opened the eyes of men to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Not that the man understood it all. He perceives that he has to do with some one sent of God. To him Jesus is a prophet. But thus the power which He had manifested in giving sight to this man enables him to trust the Lord's word as divine. Having gone so far, the rest is easy: the poor man is led much farther, and finds himself on ground that sets him free from all his former prejudices, and that gives a value to the Person of Jesus which overcomes all other considerations. The Lord develops this in the next chapter.

In truth, the Jews had made up their mind. They would have nothing to do with Jesus. They were all agreed to cast out those who believed in Him. Consequently, the poor man having begun to reason with them on the proof that existed in his own person of the Savior's mission, they cast him out. Thus cast out, the Lord — rejected before him — finds and reveals Himself to him by His personal name of glory. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man refers it to the word of Jesus, which to him was divine truth, and He proclaims Himself to him as being Himself the Son of God, and the man worships Him.

Thus the effect of His power was to blind those who saw, who were full of their own wisdom, whose light was darkness; and to give sight to those who were born blind.

In **CHAPTER 10** He contrasts Himself with all those who pretended, or had pretended, to be shepherds of Israel. He develops these three points; He comes in by the door; He is the door; and He is the Shepherd of the sheep — the good Shepherd.

He comes in by the door. That is to say, He submits to all the conditions established by Him who built the house. Christ answers to all that is written of the Messiah, and takes the path of God's will in presenting Himself to the people. It is not human energy and power awakening and attracting the passions of men; but the obedient man who bowed to Jehovah's will, kept the lowly place of a servant, and lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God, bowed in lowliness to the place in which Jehovah's judgment had placed and viewed Israel. All the Lord's

quotations in His conflict with Satan are from Deuteronomy.

Consequently He who watches over the sheep, Jehovah, acting in Israel by His Spirit and providence, and arranging all things, gives Him access to the sheep in spite of the Pharisees and priests and so many others. The elect of Israel hear His voice. Now Israel was under condemnation: He therefore brings the sheep out, but He goes before them. He leaves that ancient fold, under reproach doubtless, but going before His sheep, in obedience according to the power of God — a security to every one who believed in Him that it was the right road, a warrant for their following Him, come what might, meeting every danger and showing them the way.

The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. There are many other voices, but the sheep do not know them. Their safety consists, not in knowing them all, but in knowing that they are not the one voice which is life to them — the voice of Jesus. All the rest are the voices of strangers.

He is the door for the sheep. He is their authority for going out, their means of entering in. By entering in, they are saved. They go in and out. It is no longer the yoke of ordinances, which, in guarding them from those without, put them in prison. The sheep of Christ are free: their safety is in the personal care of the Shepherd; and in this liberty they feed in the good and fat pastures which His love supplies. In a word, it is no longer Judaism; it is salvation, and liberty, and food. The thief comes to make his profit on the sheep by killing them. Christ is come that they might have life, and that abundantly; that is, according to the power of this life in Jesus, the Son of God, who would soon have this life (whose power was in His Person) in resurrection beyond death.

The true Shepherd of Israel — at least of the remnant of the sheep — the door to authorise their coming out of the Jewish fold, and to admit them into the privileges of God by giving them life according to the abundance in which He was able to bestow it — He was also in special connection with the sheep thus set apart, the good Shepherd who thus gave His life for the sheep. Others would think of themselves, He of His sheep. He knew them, and they knew Him, even as the Father knew Him, and He knew the Father. Precious principle! They could have understood an earthly knowledge and interest on the part of the Messiah on earth with regard to

His sheep. But the Son, although He had given His life and was in heaven, knows His own, even as the Father knew Him when He was on the earth.

Thus He laid down His life for the sheep; and He had other sheep who were not of this fold, and His death intervened for the salvation of these poor Gentiles. He would call them. Doubtless He had given His life for the Jews also — for all the sheep in general, as such (v. 11). But He does not speak distinctly of the Gentiles until after He has spoken of His death. He would bring them also, and there should be but one flock and one Shepherd (not “one fold,” there is no fold now).

Now this doctrine teaches the rejection of Israel, and the calling out of the elect among that people, presents the death of Jesus as being the effect of His love for His own, tells of His divine knowledge of His sheep when He shall be away from them, and of the call of the Gentiles. The importance of such instruction at that moment is obvious. Its importance, thank God! is not lost by the lapse of time, and is not limited to the fact of a change of dispensation. It introduces us into the substantial realities of the grace connected with the Person of Christ. But the death of Christ was more than love for His sheep. It had an intrinsic value in the Father’s eyes. “Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” He does not say here for His sheep — it is the thing itself that is well-pleasing to the Father. We love because God has first loved us, but Jesus, the divine Son, can furnish motives for the Father’s love. In laying down His life, He glorified the Father. Death was owned to be the just penalty for sin (being at the same time annulled and he who had the power of it, 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14), and eternal life brought in as the fruit of redemption — life from God. Here also the rights of the Person of Christ are set forth. No man takes His life from Him: He lays it down Himself. He had this power (possessed by no other, true only of Him who had divine right) to lay it down, and power to take it again. Nevertheless, even in this, He did not depart from the path of obedience. He had received this commandment from His Father. But who would have been able to perform it save He who could say, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again”?*

[* Love and obedience are the governing principles of divine life. This is unfolded in the First Epistle of John as to ourselves. Another mark of it in the creature is dependence, and this was fully manifested in Jesus as man.]

They discuss what He had been saying. There were some who only saw in Him a man beside himself, and who insulted Him. Others, moved by the power of the miracle He had performed, felt that His words had a different character from that of madness. To a certain point their consciences were reached. The Jews surround Him, and ask how long He would keep them in suspense. Jesus answers that He had already told them; and that His works bore Him testimony. He appeals to the two testimonies which we have seen brought forward in the previous chapter (8 and 9); namely, His word and His works. But He adds, they were not of His sheep. He then takes occasion, without noticing their prejudices, to add some precious truths respecting His sheep. They hear His voice; He knows them; they follow Him; He gives them eternal life; they shall never perish. On the one hand, there shall be no perishing of life as within; on the other, no one shall pluck them out of the Savior's hand — force from without shall not overcome the power of Him who keeps them. But there is another and an infinitely precious truth which the Lord in His love reveals to us. The Father had given us to Jesus, and He is greater than all who would seek to pluck us out of His hand. And Jesus and the Father are one. Precious teaching! in which the glory of the Person of the Son of God is identified with the safety of His sheep, with the height and depth of the love of which they are the objects. Here it is not a testimony which, as altogether divine, sets forth what man is. It is the work and the efficacious love of the Son, and at the same time that of the Father. It is not "I am"; but "I and the Father are one." If the Son has accomplished the work, and takes care of the sheep, it was the Father who gave them to Him. The Christ may perform a divine work, and furnish a motive for the Father's love, but it was the Father who gave it Him to do. Their love to the sheep is one, as those who bear that love are one.

CHAPTER 8, therefore, is the manifestation of God in testimony, and as light; chapters 9 and 10, the efficacious grace which gathers the sheep under the care of the Son, and of the Father's love. John speaks of God when he speaks of a holy nature, and man's responsibility — of the Father and the Son, when he speaks of grace in connection with the people of God.

Observe, that the wolf may come and catch* the sheep, if the shepherds are hirelings; but he cannot catch* them out of the Savior's hands.

[* The words catcheth and pluck in verses 12, 28 and 29 are the same in the original.]

At the end of the chapter, the Jews having taken up stones to stone Him, because He made Himself equal with God, the Lord does not seek to prove to them the truth of what He is, but shows that, according to their own principles and the testimony of the scriptures, they were wrong in this case. He appeals again to His own words and works, as proving that He was in the Father and the Father in Him. Again they take up stones, and Jesus definitely leaves them. It was all over with Israel.

CHAPTER 11. We come now to the testimony which the Father renders to Jesus in answer to His rejection. In this chapter the power of resurrection and of life in His own Person are presented to faith.* But here it is not simply that He is rejected: man is looked upon as dead, and Israel also. For it is man in the person of Lazarus. This family was blessed; it received the Lord into its bosom. Lazarus falls sick. All the Lord's human affections would be naturally concerned. Martha and Mary feel this; and they send Him word that he whom He loved was sick. But Jesus stays where He is. He might have said the word, as in the case of the centurion, and of the sick child at the beginning of this Gospel. But He did not. He had manifested His power and His goodness in healing man as he is found on earth, and delivering him from the enemy, and that in the midst of Israel. But this was not His object here — far from it — or the limits of what He was come to do. It was a question of bestowing life, or raising up again that which was dead before God. This was the real state of Israel; it was the state of man. Therefore He allows the condition of man under sin to go on and manifest itself in all the intensity of its effects down here, and permits the enemy to exercise his power to the end. Nothing remained but the judgment of God; and death, in itself, convicted man of sin while conducting him to judgment. The sick may be healed — there is no remedy for death. All is over for man, as man here below. Nothing remains but the judgment of God. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. The Lord therefore does not heal in this instance. He allows the evil to go on to the end — to death. That was the true place of man. Lazarus once fallen asleep, He goes to awaken him. The disciples fear the Jews, and with reason. But the Lord, having waited for His Father's will, does not fear to accomplish it. It was day to Him.

[* It is very striking to see the Lord in the lowliness of obedient service, allowing evil to have its full way in man's failure (death) and Satan's power, till His Father's will called Him to meet it. Then no danger hinders, and then He is the resurrection and the life in personal presence and power, and then giving Himself — being such, up to death for us.]

In fact, whatever might be His love for the nation, He must needs let it die (indeed it was dead), and wait for the time appointed by God to raise it up again. If He must die Himself to accomplish it, He commits Himself to His Father.

But let us follow out the depths of this doctrine. Death has come in; it must take effect. Man is really in death before God; but God in grace comes in. Two things are presented in our history. He might have healed. The faith and hope of neither Martha, Mary, nor the Jews, went any farther. Only Martha acknowledges that, as the Messiah, favored of God, He would obtain from Him whatsoever He asked. But He had not prevented the death of Lazarus. He had done so many times, even for strangers, for whosoever desired it. In the second place, Martha knew that her brother would rise again at the last day; but true as it was, this truth availed nothing. Who would answer for man, dead through judgment on sin? To rise again and appear before God was not an answer to death come in by sin. The two things were true. Christ had often delivered mortal man from his sufferings in flesh, and there shall be a resurrection at the last day. But these things were of no value in the presence of death. Christ was, however, there; and He is, thanks be to God! the resurrection and the life. Man being dead, resurrection comes first. But Jesus is the resurrection and the life in the present power of a divine life. And observe that life, coming by resurrection, delivers from all that death implies, and leaves it behind* sin, death, all that belongs to the life that man has lost. Christ, having died for our sins, has born their punishment — has born them. He has died. All the power of the enemy, all its effect on mortal man, all the judgment of God, He has born it all, and has come up from it, in the power of a new life in resurrection, which is imparted to us; so that we are in spirit alive from among the dead, as He is alive from among the dead. Sin (as made sin, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree), death, Satan's power, God's judgment, are all past through and left behind, and man is in a wholly new state, in incorruption. It will be true of us, if we die (for we shall not all die), as to the body, or, being changed, if we do not die. But in the

communication of His life who is risen from the dead, God has quickened us with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

[* Christ took human life in grace and sinless; and as alive in this life He took sin upon Him. Sin belongs, so to speak, to this life in which Christ knew no sin, but was made sin for us. But He dies — He quits this life. He is dead to sin; He has done with sin in having done with the life to which sin belonged, not in Him indeed but in us, and alive in which He was made sin for us. Raised up again by the power of God, He lives in a new condition, into which sin cannot enter, being left behind with the life that He left. Faith brings us into it by grace. — It has been pretended that these thoughts affect the divine and eternal life which was in Christ. But this is all idle and evil cavil. Even in an unconverted sinner, dying or laying down life has nothing to do with ceasing to exist as to the life of the man within. All live to God, and divine life in Christ never could cease or be changed. He never laid that down, but in the power of that, laid down His life as He possessed it here as man, to take it up in an entirely new way in resurrection beyond the grave. The cavil is a very evil cavil. In this edition I have changed nothing in this note, but have added a few words in the hope that it may be clear to all. The doctrine itself is vital truth. In the text I have erased or altered a part for another reason, namely, that there was confusion between the divine power of life in Christ, and God's raising Him viewed as a dead man from the grave. Both are true and blessedly so, but they are different and were here confounded together. In Ephesians Christ as man is raised by God. In John it is the divine and quickening power in Himself.]

Jesus here manifested His own divine power to this effect; the Son of God was glorified in it, for we know He had not yet died for sin; but it was this same power in Him that was manifested.* The believer, even if he were dead, shall rise again; and the living who believe in Him shall not die. Christ has overcome death; the power for this was in His Person, and the Father bore Him witness of it. Are any that are His alive when the Lord exercises this power? They will never die — death exists no more in His presence. Have any died before He exercises it? They shall live — death cannot subsist before Him. All the effect of sin upon man is completely destroyed by resurrection, viewed as the power of life in Christ. This refers of course to the saints, to whom life is communicated. The same divine power is, of course, exercised as to the wicked; but it is not the communication of life from Christ, nor being raised with Him, as is evident.**

[* Resurrection has a double character: divine power, which He could exercise and did exercise as to Himself (chap. 2:19), and here as to Lazarus, both the proof of divine sonship; and the deliverance of a dead man from his state of death. Thus God raised Christ from the dead, so here Christ raises Lazarus. In Christ's resurrection both were united in His own Person. Here, of course, they were separate. But Christ has life in Himself and that in divine power.

But He laid down His life in grace. We are quickened together with Him in Ephesians 2. But it seems avoided saying, He was quickened, when speaking of Him alone in chapter 1.]

[** The cavil I have referred to in the note to page 345 sanctions (most unwittingly, I gladly admit) the pestiferous doctrine of annihilation, as if laying down life, or death, that is the end of natural life, were ceasing to exist. I notice it, because this form of evil doctrine is one very current now. It subverts the whole substance of Christianity.]

Christ exercised this power in obedience and in dependence on His Father, because He was man, walking before God to do His will; but He is the resurrection and the life. He has brought the power of divine life into the midst of death; and death is annihilated by it, for in life death is no more. Death was the end of natural life to sinful man. Resurrection is the end of death, which has thus no longer anything in us. It is our advantage that, having done all it could do, it is finished. We live in the life* that put an end to it. We come out from all that could be connected with a life that no longer exists. What a deliverance! Christ is this power. He became this for us in its full display and exercise in His resurrection.

[* Observe the sense which the apostle had of the power of this life, when he says, "That mortality might be swallowed up of life." Consider, in this point of view, the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians.]

Martha, while loving Him and believing in Him, does not understand this; and she calls Mary, feeling that her sister would better understand the Lord. We will speak a little of these two presently. Mary, who waited for the Lord's own calling her to Him, modestly though sorrowfully leaving the initiative with Him, believing thus that the Lord had called her, goes to Him directly. Jews and Martha and Mary all had seen miracles and healings that had arrested the power of death. To this they all refer. But here life had passed away. What now could help? If He had been there, His love and power they could have counted on. Mary falls down at His feet weeping. On the point of resurrection power she understood no more than Martha; but her heart is melted under the sense of death in the presence of Him who had life. It is an expression of need and sorrow rather than a complaint that she utters. The Jews also weep: the power of death was on their hearts. Jesus enters into it in sympathy. He was troubled in spirit. He sighs before God, He weeps with man; but His tears turn into a groan, which was, though inarticulate, the weight of death, felt in sympathy, and

presented to God by this groan of love which fully realised the truth; and that in love to those who were suffering the ill that His groan expressed.

He bore death before God in His spirit as the misery of man — the yoke from which man could not deliver himself, and He is heard. The need brings His power into action. It was not His part now patiently to explain to Martha what He was. He feels and acts upon the need to which Mary had given expression, her heart being opened by the grace that was in Him.

Man may sympathise: it is the expression of his powerlessness. Jesus enters into the affliction of mortal man, puts Himself under the burden of death that weighs upon man (and that more thoroughly than man himself can do), but He takes it away with its cause. He does more than take it away; He brings in the power that is able to take it away. This is the glory of God. When Christ is present, if we die, we do not die for death, but for life: we die that we may live in the life of God, instead of in the life of man. And wherefore? That the Son of God may be glorified. Death came in by sin; and man is under the power of death. But this has only given room for our possessing life according to the second Adam, the Son of God, and not according to the first Adam, the sinful man. This is grace. God is glorified in this work of grace, and it is the Son of God whose glory shines brightly forth in this divine work.

And, observe, that this is not grace offered in testimony, it is the exercise of the power of life. Corruption itself is no hindrance to God. Why did Christ come? To bring the words of eternal life to dead man. Now Mary fed upon those words. Martha served — cumbered her heart with many things. She believed, she loved Jesus, she received Him into her house: the Lord loved her. Mary listened to Him: this was what He came for; and He had justified her in it. The good part which she had chosen should not be taken from her.

When the Lord arrives, Martha goes of her own accord to meet Him. She withdraws when Jesus speaks to her of the present power of life. We are ill at ease when, although Christians, we feel unable to apprehend the meaning of the Lord's words, or of what His people say to us. Martha felt that this was rather Mary's part than hers. She goes away and calls her sister, saying, that the Master (He who taught — observe this name that she gives Him) was come, and called for her. It was her own conscience

that was to her the voice of Christ. Mary instantly arises and comes to Him. She understood no more than Martha. Her heart pours out its need at the feet of Jesus, where she had heard His words and learnt His love and grace; and Jesus asks the way to the grave. To Martha, ever occupied with circumstances, her brother stank already.

Afterwards (Martha served, and Lazarus was present), Mary anoints the Lord, in the instinctive sense of what was going on; for they were consulting to put Him to death. Her heart, taught by love to the Lord, felt the enmity of the Jews; and her affection, stimulated by deep gratitude, expends on Him the most costly thing she had. Those present blame her; Jesus again takes her part. It might not be reasonable, but she had apprehended His position. What a lesson! What a blessed family was this at Bethany, in which the heart of Jesus found (as far as could be on earth) a relief that His love accepted! With what love have we to do! Alas, with what hatred! for we see in this Gospel the dreadful opposition between man and God.

There is an interesting point to be observed here before we pass on. The Holy Ghost has recorded an incident, in which the momentary but guilty unbelief of Thomas was covered by the Lord's grace. It was needful to relate it; but the Holy Ghost has taken care to show us, that Thomas loved the Lord, and was ready, at heart, to die with Him. We have other instances of the same kind. Paul says, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Poor Mark! this was necessary on account of what took place at Perga. Barnabas also has the same place in the apostle's affection and remembrance. We are weak: God does not hide it from us; but He throws the testimony of His grace over the feeblest of His servants.

But to continue. Caiaphas, the chief of the Jews, as high priest, proposes the death of Jesus, because He had restored Lazarus to life. And from that day they conspire against Him. Jesus yields to it. He came to give His life a ransom for many. He goes on to fulfill the work His love had undertaken, in accordance with His Father's will, whatever might be the devices and the malice of men. The work of life and Or death, of Satan and of God, were face to face. But the counsels of God were being accomplished in grace, whatever the means might be. Jesus devotes Himself to the work by

which they were to be fulfilled. Having shown the power of resurrection and of life in Himself, He is again, when the time comes, quietly in the place to which His service led Him; but He no longer goes in the same manner as before into the temple. He goes thither indeed; but the question between God and man was morally settled already.

His place (chap. 12) now is with the remnant, where His heart found rest — the house of Bethany. We have, in this family, a sample of the true remnant of Israel, three different cases with regard to their position before God. Martha had faith which, no doubt, attached her to Christ, but which did not go beyond that which was needed for the kingdom. Those who will be spared for the earth in the last days will have the same. Their faith will at length acknowledge Christ the Son of God. Lazarus was there, living by that power which could have also raised up all the dead saints in the same way,* which, by grace, at the last day, will call up Israel, morally, from their state of death. In a word, we find the remnant, who will not die, spared through true faith (but faith in a living Savior, who should deliver Israel), and those who shall be brought back as from the dead, to enjoy the kingdom. Martha served; Jesus is in company with them; Lazarus sits at the table with Him.

[* I speak only of the power needed to produce this effect; for in truth, the sinful condition of man, whether Jew or Gentile, required expiation; and there would have been no saints to call out from among the dead, if the grace of God had not acted by virtue, and in view, of that expiation. I speak merely of the power that dwelt in the Person of Christ, that overcame all the power of death, which could do nothing against the Son of God. But man's condition, which made the death of Christ necessary, was only demonstrated by His rejection, which proved that all means were unavailing to bring back man, as he was, to God.]

But there was also the representative of another class. Mary, who had drunk at the fountain of truth, and had received that living water into her heart, had understood that there was something more than the hope and the blessing of Israel — namely, Jesus Himself. She does that which is suitable to Jesus in His rejection — to Him who is the resurrection before He is our life. Her heart associates her with that act of His, and she anoints Him for His burial. To her it is Jesus Himself who is in question — and Jesus rejected; and faith takes its place in that which was the seed of the assembly, still hidden in the soil of Israel and of this world, but which, in the resurrection, would come forth in all the beauty of the life of God — of

eternal life. It is a faith that expends itself on Him, on His body, in which He was about to undergo the penalty of sin for our salvation. The selfishness of unbelief, betraying its sin in its contempt of Christ, and in its indifference, gives the Lord occasion to attach its true value to this action of His beloved disciple. Her anointing His feet is pointed out here, as showing that all that was of Christ, that which was Christ, had to her a value which prevented her regarding anything else. This is a we appreciation of Christ. The faith that knows His love which passes knowledge — this kind of faith is a sweet odour in the whole house. And God remembers it according to His grace. Jesus understood her: that was all she wanted. He justifies her: who should rise up against her? This scene is over, and the course of events is resumed.

The enmity of the Jews (alas! that of man's heart, thus given up to itself, and consequently to the enemy who is a murderer by nature and the enemy of God — an enemy that nothing merely human can subdue) would fain kill Lazarus also. Man is indeed capable of this: but capable of what? Everything yields to hatred — to this kind of hatred of God who manifests Himself. But for this it would in fact be inconceivable. They must now either believe in Jesus or reject Him: for His power was so evident that they must do the one or the other — a man publicly raised from the dead after four days, and alive among the people, left no longer any possibility of indecision. Jesus knew it divinely. He presents Himself as King of Israel to assert His rights, and to offer salvation and the promised glory to the people and to Jerusalem.* The people understand this. It must be a deliberate rejection, as the Pharisees are well aware. But the hour was come: and although they could do nothing, for the world went after Him, Jesus is put to death, for “he gave himself.”

[* In this Gospel the occasion of the assembling of the crowd to meet and to accompany Jesus, was the raising of Lazarus — the testimony to His being Son of God.]

The second testimony of God to Christ has now been born to Him, as the true Son of David. He has been witnessed to as the Son of God in raising Lazarus (chap. 11:4), and Son of David in riding into Jerusalem on the ass's colt. There was yet another title to be acknowledged. As Son of man He is to possess all the kingdoms of the earth. The Greeks* come (for His fame had gone abroad), and desire to see Him. Jesus says, “The hour is

come for the Son of man to be glorified.” But now He returns to the thoughts of which Mary’s ointment was the expression to His heart. He should have been received as the Son of David; but, in taking His place as the Son of man, a very different thing necessarily opens before Him. How could He be seen as Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven to take possession of all things according to the counsels of God, without dying? If His human service on earth was finished, and He had gone out free, calling, if need were, for twelve legions of angels, no one could have had any part with Him: He would have remained alone. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” If Christ takes His heavenly glory, and is not alone in it, He dies to attain it, and to bring with Him the souls whom God has given Him. In fact the hour was come: it could no longer tarry. Everything was now ready for the end of the trial of this world, of man, of Israel; and, above all, the counsels of God were being fulfilled.

[* Greeks properly speaking: not Hellenists, that is, Jews who spoke the Greek language, and belonged to foreign countries, being of the dispersion.]

Outwardly all was testimony to His glory. He enters Jerusalem in triumph — the multitude proclaiming Him King. What were the Romans about? They were silent before God. The Greeks came to seek Him. All is ready for the glory of the Son of man. But the heart of Jesus well knew that for this glory — for the accomplishment of the work of God, for His having one human being with Him in the glory, for the granary of God to be filled according to the counsels of grace — He must die. No other way for guilty souls to come to God. That which Mary’s affection foresaw, Jesus knows according to the truth; and according to the mind of God He feels it, and submits to it. And the Father responds at this solemn moment, by bearing testimony to the glorious effect of that which His sovereign majesty at the same time required — majesty which Jesus fully glorified by His obedience: and who could do this, excepting Him who, by that obedience, brought in the love and the power of God which accomplished it?

In that which follows, the Lord introduces a great principle connected with the truth contained in His sacrifice. There was no link between the natural life of man and God. If in the man Christ Jesus there was a life in entire harmony with God, He must needs lay it down on account of this condition of man. Being of God, He could not remain in connection with

man. Man would not have it. Jesus would rather die than not fulfill His service by glorifying God — than not be obedient unto the end. But if any one loved his life of this world, he lost it; for it was not in connection with God. If any one by grace hated it — separated himself in heart from this principle of alienation from God, and devoted his life to Him, he would have it in the new and eternal state. To serve Jesus therefore was to follow Him; and where He was going, there should His servant be. The result of association of heart with Jesus here, shown in following Him, passes out of this world, as He was indeed doing, and Messiah blessings, into the heavenly and eternal glory of Christ. If any one served Him, the Father would remember it, and would honor him. All this is said in view of His death, the thought of which comes over His mind; and His soul is troubled. And in the just dread of that hour which, in itself, is the judgment of God, and the end of man as God created him here on earth, He asks God to deliver Him from that hour. And, in truth, He had come — not then to be (although He was) the Messiah, not then (although it was His right) to take the kingdom; but He had come for this very hour — by dying to glorify His Father. This He desires, involve what it may. “Father, glorify thy name,” is His only prayer. This is perfectness — He feels what death is: there would have been no sacrifice if He had not felt it. But while feeling it, His only desire was to glorify His Father. If that cost Him everything, the work was perfect in proportion.

Perfect in this desire, and that unto death, the Father could not but answer Him. In His answer, as it appears to me, the Father announces the resurrection. But what grace, what marvel, to be admitted into such communications! The heart is astounded, while filled with worship and with grace, in beholding the perfection of Jesus, the Son of God, unto death; that is to say, absolute; and in seeing Him, with the full sense of what death was, seeking the sole glory of the Father; and the Father answering — an answer morally needful to this sacrifice of the Son, and to His own glory. Thus He said, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” I believe that He had glorified it in the resurrection of Lazarus;* He would do so again in the resurrection of Christ — a glorious resurrection which, in itself, implied ours; even as the Lord had said, without naming His own.

[* Resurrection follows the condition of Christ. Lazarus was raised while Christ was living here in the flesh, and Lazarus is raised to life in the flesh. When Christ in glory raises us, He will raise us in glory. And even now that Christ is hid in God, our life is hid with Him there.]

Let us now observe the connection of the truths spoken of in this remarkable passage. The hour was come for the glory of the Son of man. But, in order to this, it needed that the precious corn of wheat should fall into the ground and die; else it would remain alone. This was the universal principle. The natural life of this world in us had no part with God. Jesus must be followed. We should thus be with Him: this was serving Him. Thus also we should be honored by the Father. Christ, for Himself, looks death in the face, and feels all its import. Nevertheless He gives Himself to one only thing — the glory of His Father. The Father answers Him in this. His desire should be fulfilled. He should not be without an answer to His perfection. The people hear it as the voice of the Lord God, as described in the Psalms. Christ (who, in all this, had put Himself entirely aside, had spoken only of the glory of His followers and of His Father) declares that this voice came for the people's sake, in order that they might understand what He was for their salvation. Then there opens before Him, who had thus put Himself aside and submitted to everything for His Father's sake, not the future glory, but the value, the import, the glory, of the work He was about to do. The principles of which we have spoken are here brought to the central point of their development. In His death the world was judged: Satan was its prince, and he is cast out: in appearance it is Christ who was so. By death He morally and judicially destroyed him who had the power of death. It was the total and entire annihilation of all the rights of the enemy, over whomsoever and whatsoever it might be, when the Son of God and Son of man bore the judgment of God as man in obedience unto death. All the rights that Satan possessed through man's disobedience and the judgment of God upon it, were only rights in virtue of the claims of God upon man, and come back to Christ alone. And being lifted up between God and the world, in obedience, on the cross, bearing that which was due to sin, Christ became the point of attraction for all men living, that through Him they might draw nigh to God. While living, Jesus ought to have been owned as the Messiah of promise; lifted up from the earth as a victim before God, being no longer of the earth as living upon it, He was the point of attraction towards God for all those who, living on earth, were

alienated from God, as we have seen, that they might come to Him there (by grace), and have life through the Savior's death. Jesus warns the people that it was only for a little time that He, the light of the world, would remain with them. They should believe while it was yet time. Soon would the darkness come, and they would not know whither they went. We see that, whatever might be the thoughts that occupy His heart, the love of Jesus never grows cold. He thinks of those around Him — of men according to their need.

Nevertheless they did not believe according to the testimony of the prophet, given in view of His humiliation unto death, given in sight of the vision of His divine glory, which could but bring judgment on a rebellious people (Isaiah 53 and 6).

Nevertheless, such is grace, His humiliation should be their salvation; and, in the glory that judged them, God would remember the counsels of His grace, as sure a fruit of that glory as was the judgment which the Holy, Holy, Holy, Jehovah of Hosts must pronounce against evil — a judgment suspended, by His long — suffering, during centuries, but now fulfilled when these last efforts of His mercy were despised and rejected. They preferred the praise of men.

At last Jesus declares that which His coming really was — that in fact, they who believed in Him, in the Jesus whom they saw on the earth, believed in His Father, and saw His Father. He was come as the light, and they who believed should not walk in darkness. He did not judge; He was come to save; but the word which He had spoken should judge those who heard, for it was the Father's word, and it was life everlasting.

CHAPTER 13. Now, then, the Lord has taken His place as going to the Father. The time was come for it. He takes His place above, according to the counsels of God, and is no longer in connection with a world that had already rejected Him; but He loves His own unto the end. Two things are present to Him: on the one hand, sin taking the form most painful to His heart; and on the other, the sense of all glory being given to Him as man, and of whence He came and whither He was going: that is, His personal and heavenly character in relationship with God, and the glory that was given Him. He came from God and went to God; and the Father had put all things into His hands.

But neither His entrance into glory, nor the heartlessness of man's sin, takes His heart away from His disciples or even from their wants. Only He exercises His love, to put them in connection with Himself in the new position He was creating for them by entering thus into it. He could no longer remain with them on earth; and if He left them, and must leave them, He would not give them up, but fit them for being where He was. He loved them with a love that nothing stopped. It went on to perfect its results; and He must fit them to be with Him. Blessed change that love accomplished even from His being with them here below! They were to have a part with Him who came from God and went to God, and into whose hands the Father had put all things; but then they must be fit to be with Him there. To this end He is still their servant in love, and even more so than ever. No doubt He had been so in His perfect grace, but it was while among them. They were thus in a certain sense companions. They were all supping together here at the same table. But He quits this position, as He did His personal association with His disciples by ascending to heaven, by going to God. But, if He does, He still girds Himself for their service, and takes water* to wash their feet. Although in heaven, He is still serving us.** The effect of this service is, that the Holy Ghost takes away practically by the word all the defilement that we gather in walking through this world of sin. On our way we come in contact with this world that rejected Christ. Our Advocate on high (compare 1 John 2), He cleanses us from its defilement by the Holy Ghost and the word; He cleanses us in view of the relationships with God His Father, unto which He has brought us by entering into them Himself as man on high.

[* It is not blood here. That assuredly there must be. He came not by water only, but by water and blood; but here the washing is in every respect that of water. The washing from sins in His own blood is never repeated at all in any way. Christ must have suffered often in that case. See Hebrews 9 and 10. In respect of imputation, there is no more conscience of sins.]

[* The Lord in becoming a man took on Him the form of a servant (Philippians 2). This He never gives up. It might have been thought so when He went into glory, but He is showing here that it is not so. He is now as in Exodus 21 saying, I love my master, I love my wife, I love my children; I will not go out free; and becoming a servant for ever, even if He could have had twelve legions of angels. Here He is a servant to wash their feet, defiled in passing through this world. In Luke 12 we see that He keeps the place of service in glory. It is a sweet thought that even there He ministers heaven's best blessedness to our happiness.]

A purity was needed that should befit the presence of God, for He was going there. However it is only the feet that are in question. The priests that served God in the tabernacle were washed at their consecration. That washing was not repeated. So, when once spiritually renewed by the word, this is not repeated for us. In “he that is washed” it is a different word from “save to wash his feet.” The first is bathing the whole body; the latter washing hands or feet. We need the latter continually, but are not, once born of water by the word, washed over again, any more than the priests’ first consecration was repeated. The priests washed their hands and their feet every time they engaged in service — that they drew near to God. Our Jesus restores communion and power to serve God, when we have lost it. He does it, and with a view to communion and service; for before God we are entirely clean personally. The service was the service of Christ — of His love. He wiped their feet with the towel wherewith He was girded (a circumstance expressive of service). The means of purification was water — the word, applied by the Holy Ghost. Peter shrinks from the idea of Christ thus humbling Himself. but we must submit to this thought, that our sin is such that nothing less than the humiliation of Christ can in any sense cleanse us from it. Nothing else will make us really know the perfect and dazzling purity of God, or the love and devotedness of Jesus: and in the realisation of these consists the having a heart sanctified for the presence of God. Peter, then, would have the Lord to wash also his hands and his head. But this is already accomplished. If we are His we are born again and cleansed by the word which He has already applied to our souls; only we defile our feet in walking. It is after the pattern of this service of Christ in grace that we are to act with regard to our brethren.

Judas was not clean; he had not been born again, was not clean through the word Jesus had spoken. Nevertheless, being sent of the Lord, they who had received him had received Christ. And this is true also of those whom He sends by His Spirit. This thought brings the treachery of Judas before the Lord’s mind; His soul is troubled at the thought, and He unburdens His heart by declaring it to His disciples. What His heart is occupied with here is, not His knowledge of the individual, but of the fact that one of them should do it, one of those who had been His companions.

Therefore it was, because of His saying this, that the disciples looked upon one another. Now there was one near Him, the disciple whom Jesus loved; for we have, in all this part of the Gospel of John, the testimony of grace that answers to the diverse forms of malice and wickedness in man. This love of Jesus had formed the heart of John — had given him confidingness and constancy of affection; and consequently, without any other motive than this, he was near enough to Jesus to receive communications from Him. It was not in order to receive them that he placed himself close to Jesus: he was there because he loved the Lord, whose own love had thus attached him to Himself; but, being there, he was able to receive them. It is thus that we may still learn of Him.

Peter loved Him: but there was too much of Peter, not for service, if God called him to it — and He did in grace, when He had thoroughly broken him down, and made him know himself — but for intimacy. Who, among the twelve, bore testimony like Peter, in whom God was mighty towards the circumcision? But we do not find in his epistles that which is found in John's.* Moreover each one has his place, given in the sovereignty of God. Peter loved Christ; and we see that, linked also with John by this common affection, they are constantly together; as also at the end of this Gospel he is anxious to know the fate of John. He uses John, therefore, to ask the Lord, which it was among them that should betray Him, as He had said. Let us remember that being near Jesus for His own sake is the way of having His mind when anxious thoughts arise. Jesus points out Judas by the sop, which would have checked any other, but which to him was only the seal of his ruin. It is indeed thus in degree with every favor of God that falls upon a heart that rejects it. After the sop Satan enters into Judas. Wicked already through covetousness, and yielding habitually to ordinary temptations; although he was with Jesus, hardening his heart against the effect of that grace which was ever before his eyes and at his side, and which, in a certain way, was exercised towards him, he had yielded to the suggestion of the enemy, and made himself the tool of the high priests to betray the Lord. He knew what they desired, and goes and offers himself. And when, by his long familiarity with the grace and presence of Jesus while addicting himself to sin, that grace and the thought of the Person of Christ had entirely lost their influence, he was in a state to feel nothing at betraying Him. The knowledge he had of the Lord's power, helped him to

give himself up to evil, and strengthened the temptation of Satan; for evidently he made sure that Jesus would always succeed in delivering Himself from His enemies, and, as far as power was concerned, Judas was right in thinking that the Lord could have done so. But what knew he of the thoughts of God? All was darkness, morally, in his soul.

[* On the other hand, Peter died for the Lord. John was left to care for the assembly: it does not appear that he became a martyr.]

And now, after this last testimony, which was both a token of grace and a witness to the true state of his heart that was insensible to it (as expressed in the Psalm here fulfilled), Satan enters into him, takes possession of him so as to harden him against all that might have made him feel, even as a man, the horrid nature of what he was doing, and thus enfeeble him in accomplishing the evil; so that neither his conscience nor his heart should be awakened in committing it. Dreadful condition! Satan possesses him, until forced to leave him to the judgment from which he cannot shelter him, and which will be his own at the time appointed of God — judgment that manifests itself to the conscience of Judas when the evil was done, when too late (and the sense of which is shown by a despair that his link with Satan did but augment) but which is forced to bear testimony to Jesus before those who had profited by his sin and who mocked at his distress. For despair speaks the truth; the veil is torn away; there is no longer self-deception; the conscience is laid bare before God, but it is before His judgment. Satan does not deceive there; and not the grace, but the perfection of Christ is known. Judas bore witness to the innocence of Jesus, as did the thief on the cross. It is thus that death and destruction heard the fame of His wisdom: only God knows it (Job 28:22, 23).

Jesus knew his condition. It was but the accomplishing that which He was going to do, by means of one for whom there was no longer any hope. “That thou doest,” said Jesus, “do quickly.” But what words, when we hear them from the lips of Him who was love itself! Nevertheless, the eyes of Jesus were not fixed upon His own death. He is alone. No one, not even His disciples, had any part with Him. These could no more follow Him whether He was now going, than the Jews themselves. Solemn but glorious hour! A man, He was going to meet God in that which separated man from God — to meet Him in judgment. This, in fact, is what He says, as soon as

Judas is gone out. The door which closed on Judas separated Christ from this world.

“Now,” He says, “is the Son of man glorified.” He had said this when the Greeks arrived; but then it was the glory to come — His glory as the head of all men, and, in fact, of all things. But this could not yet be; and He said, “Father, glorify thy name.” Jesus must die. It was that which glorified the name of God in a world where sin was. It was the glory of the Son of man to accomplish it there, where all the power of the enemy, the effect of sin, and the judgment of God upon sin, were displayed; where the question was morally settled; where Satan (in his power over sinful man — man under sin, and that fully developed in open enmity against God), and God met, not as in the case of Job, as an instrument in God’s hand for discipline, but for justice — that which God was against sin, but that in which, through Christ’s giving Himself, all His attributes should be in exercise, and be glorified, and by which, in fact, through that which took place, all the perfections of God have been glorified, being manifested through Jesus, or by means of that which Jesus did and suffered.

These perfections had been directly unfolded in Him, as far as grace went; but now that the opportunity of the exercise of all of them was afforded, by His taking a place which put Him to the proof according to the attributes of God, their divine perfection could be displayed through man in Jesus there where He stood in the place of man; and (made sin, and, thank God, for the sinner) God was glorified in Him. For see what in fact met in the cross: Satan’s complete power over men, Jesus alone excepted; man in open perfect enmity against God in the rejection of His Son; God manifest in grace: then in Christ, as man, perfect love to His Father, and perfect obedience, and that in the place of sin, that is, as made it (for the perfection of love to His Father and obedience were when He was as sin before God on the cross); then God’s majesty made good, glorified (Hebrews 2:10); His perfect, righteous, judgment against sin as the Holy One; but therein His perfect love to sinners in giving His only-begotten Son. For hereby know we love. To sum it up: at the cross we find, man in absolute evil — the hatred of what was good; Satan’s full power over the world — the prince of this world; man in perfect goodness, obedience, and love to the Father at all cost to Himself; God in absolute, infinite, righteousness against sin, and infinite divine love to the sinner. Good and

evil were fully settled for ever, and salvation wrought, the foundation of the new heavens and the new earth laid. Well may we say, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Utterly dishonored in the first, He is infinitely more glorified in the Second, and therefore puts man (Christ) in glory, and straightway, not waiting for the kingdom. But this requires some less abstract words; for the cross is the center of the universe, according to God, the basis of our salvation and our glory, and the brightest manifestation of God’s own glory, the center of the history of eternity.

The Lord had said, when the Greeks desired to see Him, that the hour was come for the Son of man to be glorified. He spoke then of His glory as Son of man, the glory which He should take under that title. He felt indeed that in order to bring men into that glory, He must needs pass through death Himself. But He was engrossed by one thing which detached His thoughts from the glory and from the suffering — the desire which possessed His heart that His Father should be glorified. All was now come to the point at which this was to be accomplished; and the moment had arrived when Judas (overstepping the limits of God’s just and perfect patience) was gone out, giving the reins to his iniquity, to consummate the crime which would lead to the wonderful fulfillment of the counsels of God.

Now, in Jesus on the cross, the Son of man has been glorified in a much more admirable way than He will be even by the positive glory that belongs to Him under that title. He will, we know, be clothed with that glory; but, on the cross, the Son of man bore all that was necessary for the perfect display of all the glory of God. The whole weight of that glory was brought to bear upon Him, to put Him to the proof, that it might be seen whether He could sustain it, verify, and exalt it; and that by setting it forth in the place where, but for this, sin concealed that glory, and, so to speak, gave it impiously the lie. Was the Son of man able to enter into such a place, to undertake such a task, and to accomplish the task, and maintain His place without failure to the end? This Jesus did. The majesty of God was to be vindicated against the insolent rebellion of His creature; His truth, which had threatened Him with death, maintained; His justice established against sin (who could withstand it?); and, at the same time, His love fully demonstrated. Satan having here all the sorrowful rights that he had acquired through our sin, Christ — perfect as a man, alone, apart

from all men, in obedience, and having as man but one object, that is, the glory of God, thus divinely perfect, sacrificing Himself for this purposefully glorified God. God was glorified in Him. His justice, His majesty, His truth, His love — all was verified on the cross as they are in Himself, and revealed only there; and that with regard to sin.

And God can now act freely, according to that which He is consciously to Himself, without any one attribute hiding, or obscuring, or contradicting another. Truth condemned man to death, justice for ever condemned the sinner, majesty demanded the execution of the sentence. Where, then, was love? If love, as man would conceive it, were to pass over all, where would be His majesty and His justice? Moreover, that could not be; nor would it really then be love, but indifference to evil. By means of the cross, He is just, and He justifies in grace; He is love, and in that love He bestows His righteousness on man. The righteousness of God takes the place of man's sin to the believer. The righteousness, as well as the sin, of man vanishes before the bright light of grace, and does not becloud the sovereign glory of a grace like this towards man, who was really alienated from God.

And who had accomplished this? Who had thus established (as to its manifestation, and the making it good where it had been, as to the state of things, compromised by sin), the whole glory of God? It was the Son of man. Therefore God glorifies Him with His own glory; for it was indeed that glory which He had established and made honorable, when before His creatures it was effaced by sin — it cannot be so in itself. And not only was it established, but it was thus realised as it could have been by no other means. Never was love like the gift of the Son of God for sinners; never justice (to which sin is insupportable) like that which did not spare even the Son Himself when He bore sin upon Him; never majesty like that which held the Son of God Himself responsible for the full extent of its exigencies (compare Hebrews 2); never truth like that which did not yield before the necessity of the death of Jesus. We now know God. God, being glorified in the Son of man, glorifies Him in Himself. But, consequently, He does not wait for the day of His glory with man, according to the thought of chapter 12. God calls Him to His own right hand, and sets Him there at once and alone. Who could be there (save in spirit) excepting He? Here His glory is connected with that which He alone could do — with

that which He must have done alone; and of which He must have the fruit alone with God, for He was God.

Other glories shall come in their time. He will share them with us, although in all things He has the pre-eminence. Here He is, and must ever be, alone (that is, in that which is personal to Himself). Who shared the cross with Him, as suffering for sin, and fulfilling righteousness? We, indeed, share it with Him so far as suffering for righteousness' sake, and for the love of Him and His people, even unto death: and thus we shall share His glory also. But it is evident that we could not glorify God for sin. He who knew no sin could alone be made sin. The Son of God alone could bear this burden.

In this sense the Lord — when His heart found relief in pouring out these glorious thoughts, these marvelous counsels — addressed His disciples with affection, telling them that their connection with Him here below would soon be ended, that He was going where they could not follow Him, any more than could the unbelieving Jews. Brotherly love was, in a certain sense, to take His place. They were to love one another as He had loved them, with a love superior to the faults of the flesh in their brethren — brotherly love gracious in these respects. If the main pillar were taken away against which many around it were leaning, they would support each other, although not by their strength. And thus should the disciples of Christ be known.

Now Simon Peter desires to penetrate into that which no man, save Jesus, could enter — God's presence by the path of death. This is fleshly confidence. The Lord tells him, in grace, that it could not be so now. He must dry up that sea fathomless to man — death — that overflowing Jordan; and then, when it was no longer the judgment of God, nor wielded by the power of Satan (for in both these characters Christ has entirely destroyed its power for the believer), then His poor disciple might pass through it for the sake of righteousness and of Christ. But Peter would follow Him in his own strength, declaring himself able to do exactly that which Jesus was going to do for him. Yet, in fact, terrified at the first movement of the enemy, he draws back before the voice of a girl, and denies the Master whom he loved. In the things of God, fleshly confidence

does but lead us into a position in which it cannot stand. Sincerity alone can do nothing against the enemy. We must have the strength of God.

The Lord now (chap. 14) begins to discourse with them in view of His departure. He was going where they could not come. To human sight they would be left alone upon the earth. It is to the sense of this apparently desolate condition that the Lord addresses Himself, showing them that He was an object for faith, even as God was. In doing this, He opens to them the whole truth with respect to their condition. His work is not the subject treated of, but their position by virtue of that work. His Person should have been for them the key to that position, and would be so now: the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who should come, would be the power by which they should enjoy it, and indeed more yet.

To Peter's question, "Whither goest thou?" the Lord replies. Only when the desire of the flesh seeks to enter into the path on which Jesus was then entering, the Lord could but say that the strength of the flesh was unavailing there; for, in fact, he proposed to follow Christ in death. Poor Peter!

But when the Lord has written the sentence of death upon the flesh for us, by revealing its impotency, He can then (chap. 14) reveal that which is beyond it for faith; and that which belongs to us through His death throws its light back, and teaches who He was, even when on earth, and always, before the world was. He did but return to the place from which He came. But He begins with His disciples where they were, and meets the need of their hearts by explaining to them in what manner — better, in a certain sense, than by following Him here below — they should be with Him when absent where He would be. They did not see God corporeally present with them: to enjoy His presence they believed in Him; It was to be the same thing with regard to Jesus. They were to believe in Him. He did not forsake them in going away, as though there were only room for Himself in His Father's house. (He alludes to the temple as a figure.) There was room for them all. The going thither, observe, was still His thought — He is not here as the Messiah. We see Him in the relationships in which He stood according to the eternal truths of God. He had always His departure in view: had there been no room for them, He would have told them so. Their place was with Him. But He was going to prepare a place

for them. Without presenting redemption there, and presenting Himself as the new man according to the power of that redemption, there was no place prepared in heaven. He enters it in the power of that life which should bring them in also. But they should not go alone to rejoin Him, nor would He rejoin them down here. Heaven, not earth, was in question. Nor would He simply send others for them; but as those He dearly valued, He would come for them Himself, and receive them unto Himself, that where He was, there should they be also. He would come from the Father's throne: there, of course, they cannot sit; but He will receive them there, where He shall be in glory before the Father. They should be with Him — a far more excellent position than His remaining with them here below, even as Messiah in glory on the earth.

Now, also, having said where He was going, that is, to His Father (and speaking according to the effect of His death for them), He tells them that they knew whither He was going, and the way. For He was going to the Father, and they had seen the Father in seeing Him; and thus, having seen the Father in Him, they knew the way; for in coming to Him, they came to the Father, who was in Him as He was in the Father. He was, then, Himself the way. Therefore He reproaches Philip with not having known Him. He had been long with them, as the revelation in His own Person of the Father; and they ought to have known Him, and to have seen that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him, and thus have known where He was going, for it was to the Father. He had declared the name of the Father; and if they were unable to see the Father in Him, or to be convinced of it by His words, they ought to have known it by His works; for the Father who dwelt in Him — He it was who did the works. This depended on His own Person, being still in the world; but a striking proof was connected with His departure. After He was gone, they would do even greater works than He did, because they should act in connection with His greater nearness to the Father. This was requisite to His glory. It was even unlimited. He placed them in immediate connection with the Father by the power of His work and of His name; and whatsoever they should ask the Father in His name, Christ Himself would do it for them. Their request should be heard and granted by the Father — shewing what nearness He had acquired for them; and He (Christ) would do all they should ask. For the power of the Son was not, and could not be, wanting to the Father's

will: there was no limit to His power. 366 But this led to another subject. If they loved Him, it was to be shown, not in regrets, but in keeping His commandments. They were to walk in obedience. This characterises discipleship up to the present time. Love desires to be with Him, but shows itself by obeying His commands; for Christ also has a right to command. On the other hand He would seek their good on high, and another blessing should be granted them; namely, the Holy Ghost Himself, who should never leave them, as Christ was about to do. The world could not receive Him. Christ, the Son, had been shown to the eyes of the world, and ought to have been received by it. The Holy Ghost would act, being invisible; for by the rejection of Christ, it was all over with the world in its natural and creature relationships with God. But the Holy Ghost should be known by the disciples; for He should not only remain with them, as Christ could not, but be in them, not with them as He was. The Holy Ghost would not be seen then or known by the world.

Until now, in His discourse, He had led His disciples to follow Him (in spirit) on high, through the knowledge which acquaintance with His Person (in which the Father was revealed) gave them of whither He was going, and of the way. He was Himself the way, as we have seen. He was the truth itself, in the revelation (and the perfect revelation) of God and of the soul's relationship to Him; and, indeed, of the real condition and character of all things, by bringing out the perfect light of God in His own Person who revealed Him. He was the life, in which God and the truth could thus be known. Men came by Him; they found the Father revealed in Him; and they possessed in Him that which enabled them to enjoy, and in the reception of which they came in fact to, the Father.

But, now, it is not what is objective which He presents; not the Father in Him (which they ought to have known) and He in the Father, when here below. He does not, therefore, raise their thoughts to the Father through Himself and in Himself, and He in the Father in heaven. He sets before them that which should be given them down here — the stream of blessing that should flow for them in this world, by virtue of that which Jesus was, and was for them, in heaven. The Holy Ghost once introduced as sent, the Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you." His presence, in spirit, here below, is the consolation of His people. They should see Him; and this is much more true than seeing Him with the eyes

of flesh. Yes, more true; it is knowing Him in a much more real way, even though by grace they had believed in Him as the Christ, the Son of God. And, moreover, this spiritual sight of Christ by the heart, through the presence of the Holy Ghost, is connected with life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." We see Him, because we have life, and this life is in Him, and He in this life. "This life is in the Son." It is as sure as His duration. It is derived from Him. Because He lives, we shall live. Our life is, in everything, the manifestation of Himself who is our life. Even as the apostle expresses it, "That the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies." Alas! the flesh resists; but this is our life in Christ.

But this is not all. The Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we know that we are in Christ.* "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." It is not "the Father in me which, however, was always true], and I in him" — words, the first of which, here omitted, expressed the reality of His manifestation of the Father here on earth. The Lord only expresses that which belongs to His being really and divinely one with the Father — "I am in my Father." It is this last part of the truth (implied, doubtless, in the other when rightly understood) of which the Lord here speaks. It could not really be so; but men might imagine such a thing as a manifestation of God in a man, without this man being really such — so truly God, that is to say, in Himself — that it must also be said, He is in the Father. People dream of such things; they speak of the manifestation of God in flesh. We speak of God manifest in the flesh. But here all ambiguity is obviated — He was in the Father, and it is this part of the truth which is repeated here; adding to it, in virtue of the presence of the Holy Ghost, that while the disciples should indeed fully know the divine Person of Jesus, they should moreover know that they were themselves in Him. He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Jesus did not say that they ought to have known this while He was with them on earth. They ought to have known that the Father was in Him and He in the Father. But in that He was alone. The disciples, however, having received the Holy Ghost, should know their own being in Him — a union of which the Holy Ghost is the strength and the bond. The life of Christ flows from Him in us. He is in the Father, we in Him, and He also in us, according to the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost.

[* Note, this is individual, not the union of the members of the body with Christ; nor is union indeed an exact term for it. We are in Him. This is more than union, but not the same thing. It is nature and life, and position in it, our place in that nature and life. When He was on earth, and they had not the Holy Ghost, they should have known that He was in the Father and the Father in Him. When He was in heaven, and they had the Holy Ghost, they would know they were in Him and He in them.]

This is the subject of the common faith, true of all. But there is continual guardianship and government, and Jesus manifests Himself to us in connection with, and in a manner dependent on, our walk. He who is mindful of the Lord's will possesses it, and observes it. A good child not only obeys when he knows his father's will, but he acquires the knowledge of that will by giving heed to it. This is the spirit of obedience in love. If we act thus with regard to Jesus, the Father, who takes account of all that relates to His Son, will love us. Jesus will also love us, and will manifest Himself to us. Judas (not Iscariot) did not understand this, because he saw no farther than a bodily manifestation of Christ, such as the world also could perceive. Jesus therefore adds, that the truly obedient disciples (and here He speaks more spiritually and generally of His word, not merely of His commandments) should be loved of the Father, and that the Father and Himself would come and make their abode with him. So that, if there be obedience, while waiting for the time when we shall go and dwell with Jesus in the Father's presence, He and the Father dwell in us. The Father and the Son manifest themselves in us, in whom the Holy Ghost is dwelling, even as the Father and the Holy Ghost were present, when the Son was here below — doubtless in another way, for He was the Son, and we only live by Him — the Holy Ghost only dwelling in us. But with respect to those glorious Persons they are not disunited. The Father did the works in Christ, and Jesus cast out devils by the Holy Ghost; nevertheless, the Son wrought. If the Holy Ghost is in us, the Father and the Son come and make their abode in us. Only it will be observed here that there is government. We are, according to the new life, sanctified unto obedience. It is not here a question of the love of God in sovereign grace to a sinner, but of the Father's dealings with His children. Therefore it is in the path of obedience that the manifestations of the Father's love and the love of Christ are found. We love, but do not caress, our naughty children. If we grieve the Spirit, He will not be in us the power of the manifestation to our souls of the Father and the Son in communion, but will rather act on

our consciences in conviction, though giving the sense of grace. God may restore us by His love, and by testifying when we have wandered; but communion is in obedience. Finally, Jesus was to be obeyed; but it was the Father's word to Jesus, observe, as He was here below. His words were the words of the Father.

The Holy Ghost bears testimony to that which Christ was, as well as to His glory. It is the manifestation of the perfect life of man, of God in man, of the Father in the Son — the manifestation of the Father by the Son who is in the bosom of the Father. Such were the words of the Son here below; and when we speak of His commandments, it is not only the manifestation of His glory by the Holy Ghost, when He is on high, and its results; but His commandments when He spoke here below, and spoke the words of God; for He had not the Holy Ghost by measure, so that His words would have been mingled, and partly imperfect, or at least not divine. He was truly man, and ever man; but it was God manifest in the flesh. The old commandment from the beginning is new, inasmuch as this same life, which expressed itself in His commandments, now moves in and animates us — true in Him and in us (compare 1 John 2). The commandments are those of the man Christ, yet they are the commandments of God and the words of the Father, according to the life that has been manifested in this world in the Person of Christ. They express in Him, and form and direct in us, that eternal life which was with the Father, and which has been manifested to us in man — in Him whom the apostles could see, hear, and touch; and which life we possess in Him. Nevertheless the Holy Ghost has been given us to lead us into all truth, according to this same chapter of John's Epistle "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

To direct life is different from knowing all things. The two are connected, because, in walking according to that life, we do not grieve the Holy Spirit, and we are in the light. To direct life, where it exists, is not the same thing as to give a law imposed on man in the flesh (righteously, no doubt), promising him life if he keep these commandments. This is the difference between the commandments of Christ and the law: not as to authority — divine authority is always the same in itself — but that the law offers life, and is addressed to man responsible in flesh, offering him life as the result; while the commandments of Christ express and direct the life of one who

lives through the Spirit, in connection with his being in Christ, and Christ in him. The Holy Ghost (who, besides this, teaches all things) brought to remembrance the commandments of Christ — all things that He had said to them. It is the same thing in detail, by His grace, with Christians individually now.

Finally, the Lord, in the midst of this world, left peace to His disciples, giving them His own peace. It is when going away, and in the full revelation of God, that He could say this to them; so that He possessed it in spite of the world. He had gone through death and the drinking of the cup, put away sin for them, destroyed the power of the enemy in death, made propitiation by fully glorifying God. Peace was made, and made for them before God, and all that they were brought into — the light as He was, so that this peace was perfect in the light; and it was perfect in the world, because it brought them so into connection with God that the world could not even touch or reach their source of joy. Moreover Jesus had so accomplished this for them, and He bestowed it on them in such a way, that He gave them the peace which He Himself had with the Father, and in which, consequently, He walked in this world. The world gives a part of its goods while not relinquishing the mass; but what it gives, it gives away and has no longer. Christ introduces into the enjoyment of that which is His own — of His own position before the Father.* The world does not and cannot give in this manner. How perfect must that peace have been which He enjoyed with the Father — that peace He gives to us — His own!

[* This is blessedly true in every respect, except of course essential Godhead and oneness with the Father: in this He remains divinely alone. But all He has as man, and as Son in manhood, He introduces into, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” His peace, His joy, the words the Father gave to Him, He has given to us; the glory given to Him He has given to us; with the love wherewith the Father has loved Him we are loved. The counsels of God were not merely to meet our responsibility as children of Adam, but before the world to put us into the same position with the second Adam, His own Son. And Christ’s work has made that to be righteousness.]

There remains yet one precious thought — a proof of unspeakable grace in Jesus. He so reckons upon our affection, and this as personal to Himself, that He says to them, “If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go

unto the Father.” He gives us to be interested in His own glory, in His happiness, and, in it, to find our own.

Good and precious Savior, we do indeed rejoice that Thou, who hast suffered so much for us, hast now fulfilled all things, and art at rest with Thy Father, whatever may be Thine active love for us. Oh that we knew and loved Thee better! But still we can say in fullness of heart, Come quickly, Lord! Leave once more the throne of Thy rest and of Thy personal glory, to come and take us to Thyself, that all may be fulfilled for us also, and that we may be with Thee and in the light of Thy Father’s countenance and in His house. Thy grace is infinite, but Thy presence and the joy of the Father shall be the rest of our hearts, and our eternal joy.

Here the Lord closes this part of His discourse.* He had shown them as a whole all that flowed from His departure and from His death. The glory of His Person, observe, is always here the subject; for, even with regard to His death, it is said, “Now is the Son of man glorified.” Nevertheless He had forewarned them of it, that it might strengthen and not weaken their faith, for He would not talk much more with them. The world was under the power of the enemy, and he was coming: not because he had anything in Christ — he had nothing — therefore he had not even the power of death over Him. His death was not the effect of the power of Satan over Him, but thereby He showed the world that He loved the Father; and He was obedient to the Father, cost what it would. And this was absolute perfection in man. If Satan was the prince of this world, Jesus did not seek to maintain His Messiah glory in it. But He showed to the world, there where Satan’s power was, the fullness of grace and of perfection in His own Person; in order that the world might come from itself (if I may use such an expression) those at least, who had ears to hear.

[* Chapter 14 gives to us the Son’s personal relationship with the Father, and our place in Him who is in it, known by the Holy Ghost given. In chapter 15 we have His place and standing on earth, the true Vine, and then His state of glory as exalted and sending the Comforter to reveal that.]

The Lord then ceases to speak, and goes forth. He is no longer seated with His own, as of this world. He arises and quits it.

That which we have said of the Lord’s commandments, given during His sojourn here below (a thought to which the succeeding chapters will give

interesting development) helps us much in understanding the Lord's whole discourse here to the end of chapter 16. The subject is divided into two principal parts: — The action of the Holy Ghost when the Lord should be away; and the relationship of the disciples to Him during His stay upon the earth. On the one hand, that which flowed from His exaltation to the right hand of God (which raised Him above the question of Jew and Gentile); and, on the other, that which depended on His presence upon earth, as necessarily centering all the promises in His own Person, and the relations of His own with Himself, viewed as in connection with the earth and themselves in it, even when He should be absent. There were, in consequence, two kinds of testimony: that of the Holy Ghost, strictly speaking (that is, what He revealed in reference to Jesus ascended on high); and that of the disciples themselves, as eye-witnesses to all that they had seen of Jesus on the earth (chap. 15:26, 27). Not that for this purpose they were without the help of the Holy Ghost; but the latter was not the new testimony of the heavenly glory by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. He brought to their remembrance that which Jesus had been, and that which He had spoken, while on earth. Therefore, in the passage we have been reading, His work is thus described (chap. 14:26): "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you" (compare v. 25). The two works of the Holy Ghost are here presented. Jesus had spoken many things unto them. The Holy Ghost would teach them all things; moreover, He would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said. In chapter 16:12, 13, Jesus tells them that He had many things to say, but that they could not bear them then. Afterwards, the Spirit of truth should lead them into all truth. He should not speak from Himself; but whatsoever He should hear, that should He speak. He was not like an individual spirit, who speaks on his own account. One with the Father and the Son, and come down to reveal the glory and the counsels of God, all His communications would be in connection with them, revealing the glory of Christ ascended on high — of Christ, to whom belonged all that the Father had. Here it is no question of recalling all that Jesus had said upon earth: all is heavenly in connection with that which is on high, and with the full glory of Jesus, or else relates to the future purposes of God. We shall return to this subject by-and-by. I have said these few words to mark the distinctions which I have pointed out.

CHAPTER 15. The beginning of this chapter, and that which relates to the vine, belongs to the earthly portion — to that which Jesus was on earth — to His relationship with His disciples as on the earth, and does not go beyond that position.

“I am the true vine.” Jehovah had planted a vine brought out of Egypt (Psalm 80:8). This is Israel after the flesh; but it was not the true Vine. The true Vine was His Son, whom He brought up out of Egypt — Jesus.* He presents Himself thus to His disciples. Here it is not that which He will be after His departure; He was this upon earth, and distinctively upon earth. We do not speak of planting vines in heaven, nor of pruning branches there.

[* Compare, for this substitution of Christ for Israel, Isaiah 49. He began Israel over again in blessing, as He did man.]

The disciples would have considered Him as the most excellent branch of the Vine; but thus He would have been only a member of Israel, whereas He was Himself the vessel, the source of blessing, according to the promises of God. The true Vine, therefore, is not Israel; quite the contrary, it is Christ in contrast with Israel, but Christ planted on earth, taking Israel’s place, as the true Vine. The Father cultivates this plant, evidently on the earth. There is no need of a husbandman in heaven. Those who are attached to Christ, as the remnant of Israel, the disciples, need this culture. It is on the earth that fruit-bearing is looked for. The Lord therefore says to them, “Ye are clean already, through the word which I have spoken unto you”; “Ye are the branches.” Judas, perhaps it may be said, was taken away, so the disciples who walked no more with Him. The others should be proved and cleansed, that they might bear more fruit.

I do not doubt that this relationship, in principle and in a general analogy, still subsists. Those who make a profession, who attach themselves to Christ in order to follow Him, will, if there is life, be cleansed; if not, that which they have will be taken away. Observe therefore here, that the Lord speaks only of His word — that of the true prophet — and of judgment, whether in discipline or in cutting off. Consequently He speaks not of the power of God, but of the responsibility of man a responsibility which man will certainly not be able to meet without grace; but which has nevertheless that character of personal responsibility here.

Jesus was the source of all their strength. They were to abide in Him; thus — for this is the order — He would abide in them. We have seen this in chapter 14. He does not speak here of the sovereign exercise of love in salvation, but of the government of children by their Father; so that blessing depends on walk (v. 21, 23). Here the husbandman seeks for fruit; but the instruction given presents entire dependence on the Vine as the means of producing it. And He shows the disciples that, walking on earth, they should be pruned by the Father, and a man (for in verse 6 He carefully changes the expression, for He knew the disciples and had pronounced them already clean) a man, any one who bore no fruit, would be cut off. For the subject here is not that relationship with Christ in heaven by the Holy Ghost, which cannot be broken, but of that link which even then was formed here below, which might be vital and eternal, or which might not. Fruit should be the proof.

In the former vine this was not necessary; they were Jews by birth, they were circumcised, they kept the ordinances, and abode in the vine as good branches, without bearing any fruit at all. They were only cut off from Israel for willful violation of the law. Here it is not a relationship with Jehovah founded on the circumstance of being born of a certain family. That which is looked for is the glorifying the Father by fruit-bearing. It is this which will show that they are the disciples of Him who has born so much.

Christ, then, was the true Vine; the Father, the Husbandman; the eleven were the branches. They were to abide in Him, which is realised by not thinking to produce any fruit except as in Him, looking to Him first. Christ precedes fruit. It is dependence, practical habitual nearness of heart to Him, and trust in Him, being attached to Him through dependence on Him. In this way Christ in them would be a constant source of strength and of fruit. He would be in them. Out of Him they could do nothing. If, by abiding in Him, they had the strength of His presence, they should bear much fruit. Moreover, “if a man” (He does not say “they”; He knew them as true branches and clean) did not abide in Him, he should be cast forth to be burnt. Again, if they abode in Him (that is, if there was the constant dependence that draws from the source), and if the words of Christ abode in them, directing their hearts and thoughts, they should command the resources of divine power; they should ask what they would, and it should

be done. But, further, the Father had loved the Son divinely while He dwelt on earth. Jesus did the same with regard to them. They were to abide in His love. In the former verses it was in Him, here it is in His love.* By keeping His Father's commandments, He had abode in His love; by keeping the commandments of Jesus, they should abide in His.

Dependence (which implies confidence, and reference to Him on whom we depend for strength, as unable to do anything without Him, and so clinging close to Him) and obedience, are the two great principles of practical life here below. Thus Jesus walked as man: He knew by experience the true path for His disciples. The commandments of His Father were the expression of what the Father was; by keeping them in the spirit of obedience, Jesus had ever walked in the communion of His love; had maintained communion with Himself. The commandments of Jesus when on earth were the expression of what He was, divinely perfect in the path of man. By walking in them, His disciples should be in the communion of His love. The Lord spoke these things to His disciples, in order that His joy** should abide in them, and that their joy should be full.

[* There are the three exhortations: Abide in me; If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will; Abide in My love.]

[** Some have thought that this means the joy of Christ in the faithful walk of a disciple: I do not think so. It is the joy He had down here, just as He left us His own peace, and will give us His own glory.]

We see that it is not the salvation of a sinner that is the subject treated of here, but the path of a disciple, in order that he may fully enjoy the love of Christ, and that his heart may be unclouded in the place where joy is found.

Neither is the question entered on here, whether a real believer can be separated from God, because the Lord makes obedience the means of abiding in His love. Assuredly He could not lose the favor of His Father, or cease to be the object of His love. That was out of the question; and yet He says, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." But this was the divine path in which He enjoyed it. It is the walk and the strength of a disciple that is spoken of, and not the means of salvation.

At verse 12 another part of the subject begins. He wills (this is His commandment) that they should love one another, as He had loved them. Before, He had spoken of the Father's love for Him, which flowed from

heaven into His heart here below.* He had loved them in this same way; but He had also been a companion, a servant, in this love. Thus the disciples were to love one another with a love that rose above all the weaknesses of others, and which was at the same time brotherly, and caused the one who felt it to be the servant of his brother. It went so far as to lay down life itself for one's friends. Now, to Jesus, he who obeyed Him was His friend. Observe, He does not say that He would be their friend. He was our friend when He gave His life for sinners: we are His friends when we enjoy His confidence, as He here expresses it — "I have told you all things that I have heard of my Father." Men speak of their affairs, according to the necessity of doing so which may arise, to those who are concerned in them. I impart all my own thoughts to one who is my friend. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?" and Abraham was called the "friend of God." Now it was not things concerning Abraham himself that God then told Abraham (He had done so as God), but things concerning the world — Sodom. God does the same with respect to the assembly, practically with respect to the obedient disciple: such a one should be the depositary of His thoughts. Moreover, He had chosen them for this. It was not they who had chosen Him by the exercise of their own will. He had chosen them and ordained them to go and bring forth fruit, and fruit that should remain; so that, being thus chosen of Christ for the work, they should receive from the Father, who could not fail them in this case, whatsoever they should ask. Here the Lord comes to the source and certainty of grace, in order that the practical responsibility, under which He puts them, should not cloud the divine grace which acted towards them and placed them there.

[* He does not say "loveth me," but "hath loved me"; that is, He does not speak merely of the eternal love of the Father for the Son, but of the Father's love displayed towards Him in His humanity here on earth.]

They were therefore to love one another.* That the world should hate them was but the natural consequence of its hatred to Christ; it sealed their association with Him. The world loves that which is of the world: this is quite natural. The disciples were not of it; and, besides, the Jesus whom it had rejected had chosen them and separated them from the world: therefore it would hate them because so chosen in grace. There was, besides, the moral reason, namely, that they were not of it; but this demonstrated their relationship to Christ, and His sovereign rights, by which He had taken

them to Himself out of a rebellious world. They should have the same portion as their Master: it should be for His name's sake, because the world — and He speaks especially of the Jews, among whom He had labored — knew not the Father who had sent Him in love. To make their boast of Jehovah, as their God, suited them very well. They would have received the Messiah on that footing. To know the Father, revealed in His true character by the Son, was quite a different thing. Nevertheless the Son had revealed Him, and, both by His words and His works, had manifested the Father and His perfections.

[* By choosing them and setting them apart to enjoy together this relationship with Him outside the world, He had put them in a position of which mutual love was the natural consequence; and, in fact, the sense of this position and love go together.]

If Christ had not come and spoken unto them, God would not have had to reproach them with sin. They might still drag on, even if in an unpurged state, without any proof (though there was plenty of sin and transgression as men and as a people under the law) that they would not have God — would not even by mercy return. The fruit of a fallen nature was there, no doubt, but not the proof that that nature preferred sin to God, when God was there in mercy, not imputing it. Grace was dealing with them, not imputing sin to them. Mercy had been treating them as fallen, not as willful creatures. God was not taking the ground of law, which imputes, or of judgment, but of grace in the revelation of the Father by the Son. The words and works of the Son revealing the Father in grace, rejected, left them without hope (compare chap. 16:9). Their real condition would otherwise not have been thoroughly tested, God would have had still a means to use; He loved Israel too much to condemn them while there was one left untried.

If the Lord had not done among them the works which no other man had done, they might have remained as they were, refused to believe in Him, and not have been guilty before God. They would have been still the object of Jehovah's long — suffering; but in fact they had seen and hated both the Son and the Father. The Father had been fully manifested in the Son — in Jesus; and if, when God was fully manifested, and in grace, they rejected Him, what could be done except to leave them in sin, afar from God? If He had been manifested only in part, they would have had an excuse; they

might have said, "Ah! if He had shown grace, if we had known Him as He is, we would not have rejected Him." They could not now say this. They had seen the Father and the Son in Jesus. Alas! they had seen and hated.*

[* Remark, that His word and His works are here again referred to.]

But this was only the fulfillment of that which was foretold of them in their law. As to the testimony born to God by the people, and of a Messiah received by them, all was over. They had hated Him without a cause.

The Lord now turns to the subject of the Holy Ghost who should come to maintain His glory, which the people had cast down to the ground. The Jews had not known the Father manifested in the Son; the Holy Ghost should now come from the Father to bear witness of the Son. The Son should send Him from the Father. In chapter 14 the Father sends Him in Jesus' name for the personal relationship of the disciples with Jesus. Here Jesus, gone on high, sends Him the witness of His exalted glory, His heavenly place. This was the new testimony, and was to be rendered unto Jesus, the Son of God, ascended up to heaven. The disciples also should bear witness of Him, because they had been with Him from the beginning. They were to testify with the help of the Holy Ghost, as eyewitnesses of His life on earth, of the manifestation of the Father in Him. The Holy Ghost, sent by Him, was the witness to His glory with the Father, whence He Himself had come.

Thus in Christ, the true Vine, we have the disciples, the branches, clean already, Christ being still present on the earth. After His departure they were to maintain this practical relationship. They should be in relationship with Him, as He, here below, had been with the Father. And they were to be with one another as He had been with them. Their position was outside the world. Now the Jews had hated both the Son and the Father; the Holy Ghost should bear witness to the Son as with the Father, and in the Father; and the disciples should testify also of that which He had been on earth.

The Holy Ghost, and, in a certain sense, the disciples take the place of Jesus, as well as of the old vine, on the earth.

The presence and the testimony of the Holy Ghost on earth are now developed.

It is well to notice the connection of the subjects in the passages we are considering. In chapter 14 we have the Person of the Son revealing the Father, and the Holy Ghost giving the knowledge of the Son's being in the Father and the disciples in Jesus on high. This was the personal condition both of Christ and the disciples, and is all linked together; only first the Father, the Son being down here, and then the Holy Ghost sent by the Father. In chapters 15, 16 you get the distinct dispensations — Christ the true Vine on earth, and then the Comforter come on earth sent down by the exalted Christ. In chapter 14 Christ prays the Father, who sends the Spirit in Christ's name. In chapter 15 Christ exalted sends the Spirit from the Father, a witness of His exaltation, as the disciples, led by the Spirit, were of His life of humiliation, but as Son on earth.

Nevertheless there is development as well as connection. In chapter 14 the Lord, although quitting the earth, speaks in connection with that which He was upon earth. It is (not Christ Himself) the Father who sends the Holy Ghost at His request. He goes from earth to heaven on their part as Mediator. He would pray the Father, and the Father would give them another Comforter, who should continue with them, not leaving them as He was doing. Their relationship to the Father depending on Him, it would be as believing in Him that He would be sent to them — not to the world — not upon Jews, as such. It should be in His name. Moreover the Holy Ghost would Himself teach them, and He would recall to their mind the commandments of Jesus — all that He had said unto them. For chapter 14 gives the whole position that resulted from the manifestation* of the Son, and that of the Father in Him, and from His departure (that is to say, its results with regard to the disciples).

[* Observe here the practical development, with respect to life, of this most deeply interesting subject, in 1 John 1 and 2. The eternal life which was with the Father had been manifested (for in Him, in the Son, was life, He was also the Word of life, and God was light. Compare John 1). They were to keep His commandments (chap. 2:3-5). It was an old commandment which they had had from the beginning — that is, from Jesus on earth, from Him whom their hands had handled. But now this commandment was true in Him and in them: that is to say, this life of love (of which these commandments were the expression) as well as that of righteousness reproduced itself in them, by virtue of their union with Him, through the Holy Ghost, according to John 14:20. They also abode in Jesus (1 John 2:6). In John 1 we find the Son who is in the bosom of the Father, who declares Him. He reveals Him as He has thus known Him — as that which the Father was to Himself. And He has brought this love (of which He was

the object) down into the bosom of humanity, and placed it in the heart of His disciples (see chapter 17:26); and this is known now in perfection by God dwelling in us, and His love being perfect in us, while we dwell in brotherly love (1 John 4:12; compare John 1:18). The manifestation of our having been thus loved will consist in our appearing in the same glory as Christ (chap. 17:22, 23). Christ manifests this love by coming from the Father. His commandments teach it us; the life which we have in Him reproduces it. His precepts give form to this life, and guide it through the ways of the flesh, and the temptations in the midst of which He, without sin, lived by this life. The Holy Ghost is its strength, as being the mighty and living link with Him, and He by whom we are consciously in Him and He in us. (Union, as the body to the Head, is another thing, which is never the subject of John's teaching.) Of His fullness we receive grace upon grace. Therefore it is that we ought to walk as He walked (not to be what He was); for we ought not to walk in the flesh, although it is in us and was not in Him.]

Now, in chapter 15 He had exhausted the subject of commandments in connection with the life manifested in Himself here below; and at the close of this chapter He considers Himself as ascended, and He adds, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father." He comes, indeed, from the Father; for our relationship is, and ought to be, immediate to Him. It is there that Christ has placed us. But in this verse it is not the Father who sends Him at the request of Jesus, and in His name. Christ has taken His place in glory as Son of man, and according to the glorious fruits of His work, and He sends Him. Consequently He bears witness to that which Christ is in heaven. No doubt He makes us perceive what Jesus was here below, where in infinite grace He manifested the Father, and perceive it much better than they did, who were with Him during His sojourn on earth. But this is in chapter 14. Nevertheless the Holy Ghost is sent by Christ from heaven, and He reveals to us the Son, whom now we know as having perfectly and divinely (albeit as man and amid sinful men) manifested the Father. We know, I repeat, the Son, as with the Father, and in the Father. From thence it is He has sent us the Holy Ghost.

In **CHAPTER 16** a further step is taken in the revelation of this grace. The Holy Ghost is looked upon as already here below.

In this chapter the Lord declares that He has set forth all His instruction with regard to His departure; their sufferings in the world as holding His place; their joy, as being in the same relationship to Him as that in which He had been while on earth to His Father; their knowledge of the fact that

He was in the Father and they in Him, and He Himself in them; the gift of the Holy Ghost, in order to prepare them for all that would happen when He was gone, that they might not be offended. For they should be cast out of the synagogues, and he who should kill them would think that he was serving God. This would be the case with those who, resting in their old doctrines as a form, and rejecting the light, would only use the form of truth by which they accredited the flesh as orthodox to resist the light which, according to the Spirit, would judge the flesh. This would they do, because they knew neither the Father nor Jesus, the Son of the Father. It is fresh truth which tests the soul, and faith. Old truth, generally received and by which a body of people are distinguished from those around them, may be a subject of pride to the flesh, even where it is the truth, as was the case with the Jews. But fresh truth is a question of faith in its source: there is not the support of a body accredited by it, but the cross of hostility and isolation. They thought they served God. They knew not the Father and the Son.

Nature is occupied with that which it loses. Faith looks at the future into which God leads. Precious thought! Nature acted in the disciples: they loved Jesus; they grieved at His going away. We can understand this. But faith would not have stopped there. If they had apprehended the necessary glory of the Person of Jesus; if their affection, animated by faith, had thought of Him and not of themselves, they would have asked, "Whither goest thou?" Nevertheless He who thought of them assures them that it would be gain to them even to lose Him. Glorious fruit of the ways of God! Their gain would be in this, that the Comforter should be here on earth with them and in them. Here, observe, Jesus does not speak of the Father. It was the Comforter here below in His stead, to maintain the testimony of His love for the disciples, and His relationship to them. Christ was going away: for if He went not away, the Comforter would not come; but if He departed, He would send Him. When He was come, He would act in demonstration of the truth with regard to the world that rejected Christ and persecuted His disciples; and He would act for blessing in the disciples themselves.

With regard to the world, the Comforter had one only subject of testimony, in order to demonstrate the sin of the world. It has not believed in Jesus — in the Son. Doubtless there was sin of every kind, and, to

speak truth, nothing but sin — sin that deserved judgment; and in the work of conversion, He brings these sins home to the soul. But the rejection of Christ put the whole world under one common judgment. No doubt every one shall answer for his sins; and the Holy Ghost makes me feel them. But, as a system responsible to God, the world had rejected His Son. This was the ground on which God dealt with the world now; this it was which made manifest the heart of man. It was the demonstration that, God being fully revealed in love such as He was, man would not receive Him. He came, not imputing their trespasses unto them; but they rejected Him. The presence of Jesus was not the Son of God Himself manifested in His glory, from which man might shrink with fear, though he could not escape; it was what He was morally, in His nature, in His character. Man hated Him: all testimony to bring man to God was unavailing. The plainer the testimony, the more he turned from it and opposed it. The demonstration of the sin of the world was its having rejected Christ. Terrible testimony, that God in goodness should excite detestation because He was perfect, and perfectly good! Such is man. The testimony of the Holy Ghost to the world, as God's to Cain of old, would be, Where is my Son? It was not that man was guilty; that he was when Christ came; but he was lost, the tree was bad.*

[* Man is judged for what he has done; he is lost by what he is.]

But this was God's path to something altogether different — the demonstration of righteousness, in that Christ went to His Father, and the world saw Him no more. It was the result of Christ's rejection. Human righteousness there was none. Man's sin was proved by the rejection of Christ. The cross was indeed judgment executed upon sin. And in that sense it was righteousness; but in this world it was the only righteous One condemned by man and forsaken by God; it was not the manifestation of righteousness. It was a final judicial separation between man and God (see chapters 11 and 12:31). If Christ had been delivered there, and had become the King of Israel, this would not have been an adequate consequence of His having glorified God. Having glorified God His Father, He was going to sit at His right hand, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to be glorified in God Himself, to sit on the Father's throne. To set Him there was divine righteousness (see chapter 13:31, 32, and 17:1, 4, 5). This same righteousness deprived the world, as it is, of Jesus for ever. Man saw Him

no more. Righteousness in favor of men was in Christ at God's right hand — in judgment as to the world, in that it had lost Him hopelessly and for ever.

Moreover Satan had been proved to be the prince of this world by leading all men against the Lord Jesus. To accomplish the purposes of God in grace, Jesus does not resist. He gives Himself up to death. He who has the power of death committed himself thoroughly. In his desire to ruin man he had to hazard everything in his enterprise against the Prince of Life. He was able to associate the whole world with himself in this, Jew and Gentile, priest and people, governor, soldier, and subject. The world was there, headed by its prince, on that solemn day. The enemy had everything at stake, and the world was with him. But Christ has risen, He has ascended to His Father, and has sent down the Holy Ghost. All the motives that govern the world, and the power by which Satan held men captive, are shown to be of him; he is judged. The power of the Holy Ghost is the testimony of this, and surmounts all the powers of the enemy. The world is not yet judged, that is, the judgment executed — it will be in another manner; but it is morally, its prince is judged. All its motives, religious and irreligious, have led it to reject Christ, placing it under Satan's power. It is in that character that he has been judged; for he led the world against Him who is manifested to be the Son of God by the presence of the Holy Ghost consequent on His breaking the power of Satan in death.

All this took place through the presence on earth of the Holy Ghost, sent down by Christ. His presence in itself was the demonstration of these three things. For, if the Holy Ghost was here, it was because the world had rejected the Son of God. Righteousness was evidenced by Jesus being at the right hand of God, of which the presence of the Holy Ghost was the proof, as well as in the fact that the world had lost Him. Now the world which rejected Him was not outwardly judged, but, Satan having led it to reject the Son, the presence of the Holy Ghost proved that Jesus had destroyed the power of death; that he who had possessed that power was thus judged; that he had shown himself to be the enemy of Him whom the Father owned; that his power was gone, and victory belonged to the Second Adam, when Satan's whole power had been arrayed against the

human weakness of Him who in love had yielded to it. But Satan, thus judged, was the prince of this world.

The presence of the Holy Ghost should be the demonstration not of Christ's rights as Messiah, true as they were, but of those truths that related to man — to the world, in which Israel was now lost, having rejected the promises, although God would preserve the nation for Himself. But the Holy Ghost was doing something more than demonstrating the condition of the world. He would accomplish a work in the disciples; He would lead them into all truth, and He would show them things to come; for Jesus had many things to tell them which they were not yet able to bear. When the Holy Ghost should be in them, He should be their strength in them as well as their teacher; and it would be a wholly different state of things for the disciples. Here He is considered as present on the earth in place of Jesus, and dwelling in the disciples, not as an individual spirit speaking from Himself, but even as Jesus said, "As I hear I judge," with a judgment perfectly divine and heavenly: so the Holy Ghost, acting in the disciples, would speak that which came from above, and of the future, according to divine knowledge. It should be heaven and the future of which He would speak, communicating what was heavenly from above, and revealing events to come upon the earth, the one and the other being witnesses that it was a knowledge which belonged to God. How blessed to have that which He has to give!

But, further, He takes here the place of Christ. Jesus had glorified the Father on earth. The Holy Ghost would glorify Jesus, with reference to the glory that belonged to His Person and to His position. He does not here speak directly of the glory of the Father. The disciples had seen the glory of the life of Christ on earth; the Holy Ghost would unfold to them His glory in that which belonged to Him as glorified with the Father — that which was His own.

They would learn "in part." This is man's measure when the things of God are in question, but its extent is declared by the Lord Himself: "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. An that the Father hath is mine: therefore, said I, He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Thus we have the gift of the Holy Ghost variously presented in connection with Christ. In dependence on His Father, and representing His disciples as gone up from among them, on their behalf, He addresses Himself to the Father; He asks the Father to send the Holy Ghost (chap. 14:16). Afterwards we find that His own name is all powerful. All blessing from the Father comes in His name. It is on His account, and according to the efficacy of His name, of all that in Him is acceptable to the Father, that good comes to us. Thus the Father will send the Holy Ghost in His name (chap. 14:26). And Christ being glorified on high, and having taken His place with His Father, He Himself sends the Holy Ghost (chap. 15:26) from the Father, as proceeding from Him. Finally, the Holy Ghost is present here in this world, in and with the disciples, and He glorifies Jesus, and takes of His and reveals it to His own (chap. 16:13-15). Here all the glory of the Person of Christ is set forth, as well as the rights belonging to the position He has taken. "All things that the Father hath" are His. He has taken His position according to the eternal counsels of God, in virtue of His work as Son of man. But if He has entered into possession in this character, all that He possesses in it is His, as a Son to whom (being one with the Father) all that the Father has belongs.

There He should be hidden for a while: the disciples should afterwards see Him, for it was only the accomplishment of the ways of God; it was no question of being, as it were, lost by death. He was going to His Father. On this point the disciples understood nothing. The Lord develops the fact and its consequences, without yet showing them the whole import of what He said. He takes it up on the human and historical side. The world would rejoice at having got rid of Him. Miserable joy! The disciples would lament, although it was the true source of joy for them; but their sorrow should be turned into joy. As testimony, this took place when He showed Himself to them after His resurrection; it will be fully accomplished when He shall return to receive them unto Himself. But when they had seen Him again, they should understand the relationship in which He has placed them with His Father, they should enjoy it by the Holy Ghost. It should not be as though they could not themselves draw nigh to the Father, while Christ could do so (as Martha said, "I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, he will give it thee"). They might themselves go directly to the Father, who loved them, because they had believed in Jesus, and had

received Him when He had humbled Himself in this world of sin (in principle it is always thus); and asking what they would in His name they should receive it, so that their joy might be full in the consciousness of the blessed position of unfailing favor into which they were brought, and of the value of all that they possessed in Christ.

Nevertheless the Lord already declares to them the basis of the truth — He came from the Father, He was going away to the Father. The disciples think they understand that which He had thus spoken without a parable. They felt that He had divined their thought, for they had not expressed it to Him. Yet they did not rise really to the height of what He said. He had told them that they had believed in His having come “from God.” This they understood; and that which had taken place had confirmed them in this faith, and they declare their conviction with regard to this truth; but they do not enter into the thought of coming “from the Father,” and going away “to the Father.” They fancied themselves quite in the light; but they had apprehended nothing that raised them above the effect of Christ’s rejection, which the belief that He came from the Father and was going to the Father would have done. Jesus therefore declares to them, that His death would scatter them, and that they would forsake Him. His Father would be with Him; He should not be alone. Nevertheless He had explained all these things to them, in order that they should have peace in Him. In the world that rejected Him they should have tribulation; but He had overcome the world, they might be of good cheer.

This ends the conversation of Jesus with His disciples on earth. In the following chapter He addresses His Father as taking His own place in departing, and giving His disciples theirs (that is, His own), with regard to the Father and to the world, after He had gone away to be glorified with the Father. The whole chapter is essentially putting the disciples in His own place, after laying the ground for it in His own glorifying and work. It is, save the last verses, His place on earth. As He was divinely in heaven, and so showed a divine heavenly character on earth, so (He being glorified as man in heaven) they, united with Him, were in turn to display the same. Hence we have first the place He personally takes, and the work which entitles them to be in it.

CHAPTER 17 is divided thus: Verses 1-5 relate to Christ Himself, to His taking His position in glory, to His work, and to that glory as belonging to His Person, and the result of His work. Verses 1-3 present His new position in two aspects: “glorify thy Son” — power over all flesh, for eternal life to those given to Him; verses 4, 5, His work and its results. In verses 6-13 He speaks of His disciples as put into this relationship with the Father by His revealing His name to them, and then His having given them the words which He had Himself received, that they might enjoy all the full blessedness of this relationship. He also prays for them that they may be one as He and the Father were. In verses 14-21 we find their consequent relationship to the world; in verses 20, 21, He introduces those who should believe through their means into the enjoyment of their blessing. Verses 22-26 make known the result, both future, and in this world, for them: the possession of the glory which Christ Himself had received from the Father — to be with Him, enjoying the sight of His glory — that the Father’s love should be with them here below, even as Christ Himself had been its object — and that Christ Himself should be in them. The last three verses alone take the disciples up to heaven as a supplemental truth.

This is a brief summary of this marvelous chapter, in which we are admitted, not to the discourse of Christ with man, but to hear the desires of His heart, when He pours it out to His Father for the blessing of those that are His own. Wonderful grace that permits us to hear these desires, and to understand all the privileges that flow from His thus caring for us, from our being the subject of intercourse between the Father and the Son, of their common love towards us, when Christ expresses His own desires — that which He has at heart, and which He presents to the Father as His own personal wishes!

Some explanations may assist in apprehending the meaning of certain passages in this marvelous and precious chapter. May the Spirit of God aid us!

The Lord, whose looks of love had until then been directed towards His disciples on the earth, now lifts His eyes to heaven as He addresses His Father. The hour was come to glorify the Son, in order that from the glory He might glorify the Father. This is, speaking generally, the new position.

His career here was finished, and He had to ascend on high. Two things were connected with this — power over all flesh, and the gift of eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. “The head of every man is Christ.” Those whom the Father had given Him receive eternal life from Him who has gone up on high. Eternal life was the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He had sent. The knowledge of the Almighty gave assurance to the pilgrim of faith; that of Jehovah, the certainty of the fulfillment of the promises of God to Israel; that of the Father, who sent the Son, Jesus Christ (the Anointed Man and the Savior), who was that life itself, and so received as a present thing (1 John 1:1-4), was life eternal. True knowledge here was not outward protection or future hope, but the communication, in life, of communion with the Being thus known to the soul — of communion with God Himself fully known as the Father and the Son. Here it is not the divinity of His Person that is before us in Christ, though a divine Person alone could be in such a place and so speak, but the place that He had taken in fulfilling the counsels of God. That which is said of Jesus in this chapter could only be said of One who is God; but the point treated is that of His place in the counsels of God, and not the revelation of His nature. He receives all from His Father — He is sent by Him, His Father glorifies Him.* We see the same truth of the communication of eternal life in connection with His divine nature and His oneness with the Father in 1 John 5:20. Here He fulfills the Father’s will, and is dependent on Him in the place that He has taken, and that He is going to take, even in the glory, however glorious His nature may be. So, also, in chapter 5 of our Gospel, He quickens whom He will; here it is those whom the Father has given Him. And the life He gives is realised in the knowledge of the Father, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

[* The more we examine the Gospel of John, the more we shall see One who speaks and acts as a divine Person — one with the Father — alone could do, but yet always as One who had taken the place of a servant, and takes nothing to Himself, but receives all from His Father. “I have glorified thee”: “now glorify me.” What language of equality of nature and love! but He does not say, And now I will glorify myself. He has taken the place of man to receive all, though it be a glory He had with the Father before the world was. This is of exquisite beauty. I add, it was out of this the enemy sought to seduce Him, in vain, in the wilderness.]

He now declares the conditions under which He takes this place on high. He had perfectly glorified the Father on earth. Nothing that manifested God the Father had been wanting, whatever might be the difficulty; the contradiction of sinners was but an occasion of so doing. But this very thing made the sorrow infinite. Nevertheless Jesus had accomplished that glory on the earth in the face of all that opposed itself. His glory with the Father in heaven was but the just consequence — the necessary consequence, in mere justice. Moreover Jesus had had this glory with His Father before the world was. His work and His Person alike gave Him a right to it. The Father glorified on earth by the Son: the Son glorified with the Father on high: such is the revelation contained in these verses — a right, proceeding from His Person as Son, but to a glory into which He entered as man, in consequence of having, as such, perfectly glorified His Father on earth. These are the verses that relate to Christ. This, moreover, gives the relationship in which He enters into this new place as man, His Son, and the work by which He does so in righteousness, and thus gives us a title, and the character in which we have a place there.

He now speaks of the disciples; how they entered into their peculiar place in connection with this position of Jesus — into this relationship with His Father. He had manifested the Father's name to those whom the Father had given Him out of the world. They belonged to the Father, and the Father had given them to Jesus. They had kept the Father's word. It was faith in the revelation which the Son had made of the Father. The words of the prophets were true. The faithful enjoyed them: they sustained their faith. But the word of the Father, by Jesus, revealed the Father Himself, in Him whom the Father had sent, and put him who received them into the place of love, which was Christ's place; and to know the Father and the Son was life eternal. This was quite another thing from hopes connected with the Messiah or what Jehovah had given Him. It is thus, also, that the disciples are presented to the Father; not as receiving Christ in the character of Messiah, and honoring Him as possessing His power by that title. They had known that all which Jesus had was of the Father. He was then the Son; His relationship to the Father was acknowledged. Dull of comprehension as they were, the Lord recognises them according to His appreciation of their faith, according to the object of that faith, as known

to Himself, and not according to their intelligence. Precious truth!
(compare chap. 14:7).

They acknowledged Jesus, then, as receiving all from the Father, not as Messiah from Jehovah; for Jesus had given them all the words that the Father had given Him. Thus He had brought them in their own souls into the consciousness of the relationship between the Son and the Father, and into full communion, according to the communications of the Father to the Son in that relationship. He speaks of their position through faith — not of their realisation of this position. Thus they had acknowledged that Jesus came forth from the Father, and that He came with the Father's authority — the Father had sent Him. It was from thence He came, and He came furnished with the authority of a mission from the Father. This was their position by faith.

And now — the disciples being already in this position — He places them, according to His thoughts and His desires, before the Father in prayer. He prays for them, distinguishing them completely from the world. The time would come when (according to Psalm 2) He would ask of the Father with reference to the world; He was not doing so now, but for those out of the world, whom the Father had given Him. For they were the Father's. For all that is the Father's is in essential opposition to the world (compare 1 John 2:16).

The Lord presents to the Father two motives for His request: — 1st, They were the Father's, so that the Father, for His own glory, and because of His affection for that which belonged to Him, should keep them; 2nd, Jesus was glorified in them, so that if Jesus was the object of the Father's affection, for that reason also the Father should keep them. Besides, the interests of the Father and the Son could not be separated. If they were the Father's they were, in fact, the Son's; and it was but an example of that universal truth — all that was the Son's was the Father's, and all that was the Father's was the Son's. What a place for us! to be the object of this mutual affection, of these common and inseparable interests of the Father and the Son. This is the great principle — the great foundation of the prayer of Christ. He prayed the Father for His disciples, because they belonged to the Father; Jesus must needs, therefore, seek their blessing.

The Father would be thoroughly interested for them, because in them the Son was to be glorified.

He then presents the circumstances to which the prayer applied. He was no longer in this world Himself. They would be deprived of His personal care as present with them, but they would be in this world, while He was coming to the Father. This is the ground of His request with regard to their position. He puts them in connection, therefore, with the Holy Father — all the perfect love of such a Father — the Father of Jesus and their Father, maintaining (it was their blessing) the holiness that His nature required, if they were to be in relationship with Him. It was direct guardianship. The Father would keep in His own name those whom He had given to Jesus. The connection thus was direct. Jesus committed them to Him, and that, not only as belonging to the Father, but now as His own, invested with all the value which that would give them in the Father's eyes.

The object of His solicitude was to keep them in unity, even as the Father and the Son are one. One only divine Spirit was the bond of that oneness. In this sense the bond was truly divine. So far as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they had but one mind, one counsel, one aim. This is the unity referred to here. The Father and the Son were their only object; the accomplishing their counsels and objects their only pursuit. They had only the thoughts of God; because God Himself, the Holy Ghost, was the source of their thoughts. It was one only divine power and nature that united them — the Holy Ghost. The mind, the aim, the life, the whole moral existence, were consequently one. The Lord speaks, necessarily, at the height of His own thoughts, when He expresses His desires for them. If it is a question of realisation, we must then think of man; yet of a strength also that is perfected in weakness.

This is the sum of the Lord's desires — sons, saints, under the Father's care; one, not by an effort or by agreement, but according to divine power. He being here, had kept them in the Father's name, faithful to accomplish all that the Father had committed to Him, and to lose none of those that were His. As to Judas, it was only the fulfillment of the word. The guardianship of Jesus present in the world could now no longer exist. But He spoke these things, being still here, the disciples hearing them, in order that they might understand that they were placed before the Father in the

same position that Christ had held, and that they might thus have fulfilled in themselves, in this same relationship, the joy which Christ had possessed. What unutterable grace! They had lost Him, visibly, to find themselves (by Him and in Him) in His own relationship with the Father, enjoying all that He enjoyed in that communion here below, as being in His place in their own relationship with the Father. Therefore He had imparted to them all the words that the Father had given Him — the communications of His love to Himself, when walking as Son in that place here below; and, in the especial name of “Holy Father,” by which the Son Himself addressed Him from the earth, the Father was to keep those whom the Son had left there. Thus should they have His joy fulfilled in themselves.

This was their relationship to the Father, Jesus being away. He turns now to their relationship with the world, in consequence of the former.

He gave them the word of His Father — not the words to bring them into communion with Him, but His word — the testimony of what He was. And the world had hated them as it had hated Jesus (the living and personal testimony of the Father) and the Father Himself. Being thus in relationship with the Father, who had taken them out from the men of the world, and having received the Father’s word (and eternal life in the Son in that knowledge), they were not of the world even as Jesus was not of the world: and therefor the world hated them. Nevertheless the Lord does not pray that they might be taken out of it; but that the Father should keep them from the evil. He enters into the detail of His desires in this respect, grounded on their not being of the world. He repeats this thought as the basis of their position here below. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” What then were they to be? By what rule, by what model, were they to be formed? By the truth, and the Father’s word is truth. Christ was always the Word, but the living Word among men. In the scriptures we possess it, written and stedfast: they reveal Him, bear witness to Him. It was thus that the disciples were to be set apart. “Sanctify them by thy truth: thy word is the truth.” It was this, personally, that they were to be formed by, the Father’s word, as He was revealed in Jesus.

Their mission follows. Jesus sends them into the world, as the Father had sent Him into the world; into the world — in no wise of the world. They are sent into it on the part of Christ: were they of it, they could not be sent into it. But it was not only the Father's word which was the truth, nor the communication of the Father's word by Christ present with His disciples (points of which from verse 14 till now Jesus had been speaking, "I have given them thy word"): He sanctified Himself. He set Himself apart as a heavenly man above the heavens, a glorified man in the glory, in order that all truth might shine forth in Him, in His Person, raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father — all that the Father is being thus displayed in Him; the testimony of divine righteousness, of divine love, of divine power, totally overturning the lie of Satan, by which man had been deceived and falsity brought into the world; the perfect model of that which man was according to the counsels of God, and as the expression of His power morally and in glory — the image of the invisible God, the Son, and in glory. Jesus set Himself apart, in this place, in order that the disciples might be sanctified by the communication to them of what He was; for this communication was the truth, and created them in the image of that which it revealed. So that it was the Father's glory, revealed by Him on earth, and the glory into which He had ascended as man; for this is the complete result — the illustration in glory of the way in which He had set Himself apart for God, but on behalf of His own. Thus there is not only the forming and governing of the thoughts by the word, setting us apart morally to God, but the blessed affections flowing from our having this truth in the Person of Christ, our hearts connected with Him in grace. This ends the second part of that which related to the disciples, in communion and in testimony.

In verse 20, He declares that He prays also for those who should believe on Him through their means. Here the character of the unity differs a little from that in verse 11. There, in speaking of the disciples, He says, "as we are"; for the oneness of the Father and the Son showed itself in fixed purpose, object, love, work, everything. Therefore the disciples were to have that kind of unity. Here those who believed, inasmuch as receiving and taking part in that which was communicated, had their oneness in the power of the blessing into which they were brought. By one Spirit, in which they were necessarily united, they had a place in communion with

the Father and the Son. It was the communion of the Father and of the Son (compare 1 John 1:3; and how similar the language of the apostle is to that of Christ!). Thus, the Lord asks that they may be one in them — the Father and the Son. This was the means to make the world believe that the Father had sent the Son; for here were those that had believed it, who, however opposed their interests and habits might be, however strong their prejudices, yet were one (by this powerful revelation and by this work) in the Father and the Son.

Here His prayer ends, but not all His converse with His Father. He gives us (and here the witnesses and the believers are together) the glory which the Father has given Him. It is the basis of another, a third,* mode of oneness. All partake, it is true, in glory, of this absolute oneness in thought, object, fixed purpose, which is found in the oneness of the Father and the Son. Perfection being come, that which the Holy Ghost had produced spiritually, His absorbing energy shutting out every other, was natural to all in glory.

[* There are three unities spoken of. First of the disciples, “as we are,” unity by the power of one Spirit in thought, purpose, mind, service, the Holy Ghost making them all one, their path in common, the expression of His mind and power, and of nothing else. Then, of those who should believe through their means, unity in communion with the Father and the Son, “one in us” — still by the Holy Ghost but, as brought into that, as already said above, as in 1 John 1:3. Then unity in glory, “perfect in one,” in manifestation and descending revelation, the Father in the Son, and the Son in all of them. The second was for the world’s believing, the third for its knowing. The two first were literally accomplished according to the terms in which they are expressed. How far believers are departed from them since need not be said.]

But the principle of the existence of this unity, added yet another character to that truth — that of manifestation, or at least of an inward source which realised its manifestation in them: “I in them,” said Jesus, “and thou in me.” This is not the simple, perfect oneness of verse 11, nor the mutuality and communion of verse 21. It is Christ in all believers, and the Father in Christ, a unity in manifestation in glory, not merely in communion — a oneness in which all is perfectly connected with its source. And Christ, whom alone they were to manifest, is in them; and the Father, whom Christ had perfectly manifested, is in Him. The world (for this will be in the millennial glory, and manifested to the world) will then know (He does

not say, “that it may believe”) that Jesus had been sent by the Father (how deny it, when He should be seen in glory?) and, moreover, that the disciples had been loved by the Father, even as Jesus Himself was loved. The fact of their possessing the same glory as Christ would be the proof.

But there was yet more. There is that which the world will not see, because it will not be in it. “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.” There we are not only like Christ (conformed to the Son, bearing the image of the heavenly man before the eyes of the world), but with Him where He is. Jesus desires that we should see His glory.* Solace and encouragement for us, after having partaken of His shame: but yet more precious, inasmuch as we see that He who has been dishonored as man, and because He became man for our sake, shall, even on that account, be glorified with a glory above all other glory, save His who has put all things under Him. For He speaks here of given glory. It is this which is so precious to us, because He has acquired it by His sufferings for us, and yet it is what was perfectly due to Him — the just reward for having, in them, perfectly glorified the Father. Now, this is a peculiar joy, entirely beyond the world. The world will see the glory that we have in common with Christ, and will know that we have been loved as Christ was loved. But there is a secret for those who love Him, which belongs to His Person and to our association with Himself. The Father loved Him before the world was — a love in which there is no question of comparison but of that which is infinite, perfect, and thus in itself satisfying. We shall share this in the sense of seeing our Beloved in it, and of being with Him, and of beholding the glory which the Father has given Him, according to the love wherewith He loved Him before the world had any part whatever in the dealings of God. Up to this we were in the world; here in heaven, out of all the world’s claims or apprehension (Christ seen in the fruit of that love which the Father had for Him before the world existed). Christ, then, was the Father’s delight. We see Him in the eternal fruit of that love as Man. We shall be in it with Him for ever, to enjoy His being in it — that our Jesus, our Beloved, is in it, and is what He is.

[* This answers to Moses and Elias entering into the cloud, besides their display in the same glory as Christ, standing on the mountain.]

Meantime, being such, there was justice in the dealings of God with regard to His rejection. He had fully, perfectly, manifested the Father. The world

had not known Him, but Jesus had known Him, and the disciples had known that the Father had sent Him. He appeals here, not to the holiness of the Father, that He might keep them according to that blessed name, but to the righteousness of the Father, that He might make a distinction between the world on one side, and Jesus with His own on the other; for there was the moral reason as well as the ineffable love of the Father for the Son. And Jesus would have us enjoy, while here below, the consciousness that the distinction has been made by the communications of grace, before it is made by judgment.

He had declared unto them the Father's name, and would declare it, even when He had gone up on high, in order that the love wherewith the Father had loved Him might be in them (that their hearts might possess it in this world — what grace!) and Jesus Himself in them, the communicator of that love, the source of strength to enjoy it, conducting it, so to speak, in all the perfection in which He enjoyed it, into their hearts, in which He dwelt — Himself the strength, the life, the competency, the right, and the means of enjoying it thus, and as such, in the heart. For it is in the Son who declares it to us, that we know the name of the Father whom He reveals to us. That is, He would have us enjoy now that relationship in love in which we shall see Him in heaven. The world will know we have been loved as Jesus when we appear in the same glory with Him; but our part is to know it now, Christ being in us.

CHAPTER 18. The history of our Lord's last moments begins after the words that He addressed to His Father. We shall find even in this part of it, the general character of that which is related in this Gospel (according to all that we have seen in it), that the events bring out the personal glory of the Lord. We have, indeed, the malice of man strongly characterised; but the principal object in the picture is the Son of God, not the Son of man suffering under the weight of that which is come upon Him. We have not the agony in the garden. We have not the expression of His feeling Himself forsaken by God. The Jews too are put in the place of utter rejection.

The iniquity of Judas is as strongly marked here as in chapter 13. He well knew the place; for Jesus was in the habit of resorting thither with His disciples. What a thought — to choose such a place for His betrayal! What inconceivable hardness of heart! But alas! he had, as it were, given himself

up to Satan, the tool of the enemy, the manifestation of his power and of his true character.

How many things had taken place in that garden! What communications from a heart filled with God's own love, and seeking to make it penetrate into the narrow and too insensible hearts of His beloved disciples! But all was lost upon Judas. He comes, with the agents employed by the malice of the priests and Pharisees, to seize the Person of Jesus. But Jesus anticipates them. It is He who presents Himself to them. Knowing all things that should come upon Him, He goes forth, inquiring, "Whom seek ye?" It is the Savior, the Son of God, who offers Himself. They reply, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus says unto them, "I am he." Judas, also, was there, who knew Him well, and knew that voice, so long familiar to his ears. No one laid hands on Him: but as soon as His word echoes in their hearts, as soon as that divine "I am" is heard within them, they go backward, and fall to the ground. Who will take Him? He had but to go away and leave them there. But He came not for this; and the time to offer Himself up was come. He asks them again, therefore, "Whom seek ye?" They say, as before, "Jesus of Nazareth." The first time, the divine glory of the Person of Christ must needs display itself; and now His care for the redeemed ones. "If ye seek me," said the Lord, "let these go their way" — that the word might be fulfilled, "Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost none." He presents Himself as the good Shepherd, giving His life for the sheep. He puts Himself before them, that they may escape the danger that threatens them, and that all may come upon Himself. He yields Himself up. All is His own free offering here.

Nevertheless, whatever might be the divine glory that He manifested, and the grace of a Savior who was faithful to His own, He acts in obedience, and in the perfect calmness of an obedience that had counted the whole cost with God, and that received it all from His Father's hand. When the carnal and unintelligent energy of Peter employs force to defend Him, who, if He would, had only needed to have gone away when a word from His lips had cast down to the ground all those who came to take Him, and the word that revealed to them the object of their search deprived them of all power to seize it. When Peter smites the servant Malchus, Jesus takes the place of obedience. "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" The divine Person of Christ had been manifested; the voluntary

offering of Himself had been made, and that, in order to protect His own; and now His perfect obedience is at the same time displayed.

The malice of a hardened heart, and the want of intelligence of a carnal though sincere heart, have been brought to view. Jesus has His place alone and apart. He is the Savior. Submitting thus to man, in order to accomplish the counsels and the will of God, He allows them to take Him whither they would. Little of all that took place is related here. Jesus, although questioned, says scarcely anything of Himself. There is, before both the high priest and Pontius Pilate, the calm though meek superiority of One who was giving Himself: yet He is condemned only for the testimony He gave of Himself. Every one had already heard that which He taught. He challenges the authority which pursues the inquiry, not officially, but peacefully and morally; and when unjustly struck, He remonstrates with dignity and perfect calmness, while submitting to the insult. But He does not acknowledge the high priest in any way; while at the same time He does not at all oppose him. He leaves him in his moral incapacity.

The carnal weakness of Peter is manifested; as before his carnal energy.

When brought before Pilate (although because of truth, confessing that He was king), the Lord acts with the same calmness and the same submission; but He questions Pilate and instructs him in such a manner that Pilate can find no fault in Him. Morally incapable, however, of standing at the height of that which was before him, and embarrassed in presence of the divine prisoner, Pilate would have delivered Him by availing himself of a custom, then practiced by the government, of releasing a culprit to the Jews at the passover. But the uneasy indifference of a conscience which, hardened as it was, bowed before the presence of One who (even while thus humbled) could not but reach it, did not thus escape the active malice of those who were doing the enemy's work. The Jews exclaim against the proposal which the governor's disquietude suggested, and chose a robber instead of Jesus.

Pilate (chap. 19) gives way to his usual inhumanity. In the account, however, given in this Gospel, the Jews are prominent, as the real authors (as far as man was concerned) of the Lord's death. Jealous for their ceremonial purity, but indifferent to justice, they are not content to judge Him according to their own law;* they choose to have Him put to death

by the Romans, for the whole counsel of God must needs be accomplished.

[* It is said that their Jewish traditions forbade their putting any one to death during the great feasts. It is possible that this may have influenced the Jews; but however that might be, the purposes of God were thus accomplished. At other times the Jews were not so prompt in submitting to the Roman exigencies that deprived them of the right of life and death.]

It is on the repeated demands of the Jews that Pilate delivers Jesus into their hands — thoroughly guilty in so doing, for he had openly avowed His innocence, and had had his conscience decidedly touched and alarmed by the evident proofs there were that he had some extraordinary person before him. He will not show that he is touched, but he is so (chap. 19:8). The divine glory that pierced through the humiliation of Christ acts upon him, and gives force to the declaration of the Jews that Jesus had made Himself the Son of God. Pilate had scourged Him and given Him up to the insults of the soldiers; and here he would have stopped. Perhaps he hoped also that the Jews would be satisfied with this, and he presents Jesus to them crowned with thorns. Perhaps he hoped that their jealousy with regard to these national insults would induce them to ask for His deliverance. But, ruthlessly pursuing their malicious purpose, they cry out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate objects to this for himself, while giving them liberty to do it, saying that he finds no fault in Him. Upon this they plead their Jewish law. They had a law of their own, say they, and by this law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. Pilate, already struck and exercised in mind, is the more alarmed; and, going back to the judgment hall again, questions Jesus. He makes no reply. The pride of Pilate awakes, and he asks if Jesus does not know that he has power to condemn or to release Him. The Lord maintains, in replying, the full dignity of His Person. Pilate had no power over Him, were it not the will of God — to this He submitted. It heightened the sin of those who had delivered Him up, to suppose that man could do anything against Him, were it not that the will of God was thus to be accomplished. The knowledge of His Person formed the measure of the sin committed against Him. The not perceiving it caused everything to be falsely judged, and, in the case of Judas, showed the most absolute moral blindness. He knew His Master’s power. What was the meaning of delivering Him up to man, if it

were not that His hour was come? But, this being the case, what was the betrayer's position?

But Jesus always speaks according to the glory of His Person, and as being thereby entirely above the circumstances through which He was passing in grace, and in obedience to His Father's will. Pilate is thoroughly disturbed by the Lord's reply, yet his feeling is not strong enough to counteract the motive with which the Jews press him, but it has sufficient power to make him throw back upon the Jews all that there was of will in His condemnation, and to make them fully guilty of the Lord's rejection.

Pilate sought to withdraw Him from their fury. At last, fearing to be accused of infidelity to Caesar, he turns with contempt to the Jews, saying, "Behold your King"; acting — although unconsciously — under the hand of God, to bring out that memorable word from their lips, their condemnation, and their calamity even to this day, "We have no king but Caesar." They denied their Messiah. The fatal word, which called down the judgment of God, was now pronounced; and Pilate delivers up Jesus to them.

Jesus, humbled and bearing His cross, takes His place with the transgressors. Nevertheless He who would that all should be fulfilled ordained that a testimony should be rendered to His dignity; and Pilate (perhaps to vex the Jews, certainly to accomplish the purposes of God) affixes to the cross as the Lord's title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews": the twofold truth — the despised Nazarene is the true Messiah. Here, then, as throughout this Gospel, the Jews take their place as cast off by God.

At the same time the apostle shows — here, as elsewhere — that Jesus was the true Messiah, by quoting the prophecies which speak of that which happened to Him in general, with regard to His rejection and His sufferings, so that He is proved to be the Messiah by the very circumstances in which He was rejected of the people.

After the history of His crucifixion, as the act of man, we have that which characterises it in respect to what Jesus was upon the cross. The blood and water flow from His pierced side.

The devotedness of the women who followed Him, less important perhaps on the side of action, shines out in its own way nevertheless in that perseverance of love which brought them nigh to the cross. The more responsible position of the apostles as men scarcely allowed it to them, circumstanced as they were; but this takes nothing from the privilege which grace attaches to woman when faithful to Jesus. But it was the occasion for Christ to give us fresh instruction, by showing Himself such as He was, and by setting His work before us, above all mere circumstances, as the effect and the expression of a spiritual energy which consecrated Him, as man, entirely to God, offering Himself also to God by the eternal Spirit. His work was done. He had offered Himself up. He returns, so to speak, into His personal relationships. Nature, in His human feelings, is seen in its perfection; and, at the same time, His divine superiority, personally, to the circumstances through which He passed in grace as the obedient man. The expression of His filial feelings shows, that the consecration to God, which removed Him from all those affections that are alike the necessity and the duty of the man according to nature, was not the want of human feeling, but the power of the Spirit of God. Seeing the women, He speaks to them no longer as Teacher and Savior, the resurrection and the life; it is Jesus, a man, individually, in His human relationship.

“Woman,” He says, “behold thy son!” — committing His mother to the care of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved — and to the disciple, “Behold thy mother!” and thenceforth that disciple took her to his own home. Sweet and precious commission! A confidence which spoke that which he who was thus loved could alone appreciate, as being its immediate object. This shows us also that His love for John had a character of human affection and attachment, according to God, but not essentially divine, although full of divine grace — a grace which gave it all its value, but which clothed itself with the reality of the human heart. It was this, evidently, which bound Peter and John together. Jesus was their only and common object. Of very different characters — and so much the more united on that account — they thought but of one thing. Absolute consecration to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts. It strips them of self, and they have but one soul in thought, intent, and settled purpose, because they have only one object. But in Jesus this was perfect,

and it was grace. It is not said, “the disciple who loved Jesus”; that would have been quite out of season. It would have been to take Jesus entirely out of His place, and His dignity, His personal glory, and to destroy the value of His love to John. Nevertheless John loved Christ, and consequently appreciated thus his Master’s love; and, his heart attached to Him by grace, he devoted himself to the execution of this sweet commission, which he takes pleasure in relating here. It is indeed love that tells it, although it does not speak of itself.

I believe that we again see this feeling (used by the Spirit of God, not evidently as the foundation, but to give its color to the expression of that which he had seen and known) in the beginning of John’s first epistle.

We also see here that this Gospel does not show us Christ under the weight of His sufferings, but acting in accordance with the glory of His Person as above all things, and fulfilling all things in grace. In perfect calmness He provides for His mother; having done this, He knows that all is finished. He has, according to human language, entire self-possession.

There is yet one prophecy to be fulfilled. He says, “I thirst,” and, as God had foretold, they give Him vinegar. He knows that now there is not one detail left of all that was to be accomplished. He bows His head, and Himself gives* up His spirit.

[* This is the force of the expression; which is quite different from the word translated expired. We learn from Luke 23:46 that He did this when He had said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” But in John, the Holy Ghost is setting forth even His death as the result of a voluntary act, giving up His spirit, and not saying to whom He committed (as man with absolute and perfect faith) His human spirit, His soul, in dying. It is His divine competency that is here shown, and not His trust in His Father. The word is never used in this way but in this passage as to Christ, in either the New Testament or the LXX.]

Thus, when the whole divine work is accomplished the divine man giving up His spirit, that spirit leaves the body which had been its organ and its vessel. The time was come for so doing; and by doing it, He secured the accomplishment of another divine word — “Not one of his bones shall be broken.” But everything bore its part in the fulfillment of those words, and the purposes of Him who had pronounced them beforehand.

A soldier pierces His side with a spear. It is from a dead Savior that flow forth the tokens of an eternal and perfect salvation — the water and the blood; the one to cleanse the sinner, the other to expiate his sins. The evangelist saw it. His love for the Lord makes him like to remember that he saw Him thus unto the end; he tells it in order that we may believe. But if we see in the beloved disciples the vessel that the Holy Ghost uses (and very sweet it is to see it, and according to the will of God), we see plainly who it is that uses it. How many things John witnessed which he did not relate! The cry of grief and of abandonment — the earthquake — the centurion's confession — the history of the thief: all these things took place before his eyes, which were fixed upon his Master; yet he does not mention them. He speaks of that which his Beloved was in the midst of all this. The Holy Ghost causes him to relate that which belonged to the personal glory of Jesus. His affections made him find it a sweet and easy task. The Holy Ghost attached him to it, employing him in that which he was well suited to perform. Through grace the instrument lent itself readily to the work for which the Holy Ghost set it apart. His memory and his heart were under the dominant and exclusive influence of the Spirit of God. That Spirit employed them in His work. One sympathises with the instrument; one believes in that which the Holy Ghost relates by his means, for the words are those of the Holy Ghost.

Nothing can be more touching, more deeply interesting, than divine grace thus expressing itself in human tenderness and taking its form. While possessing the entire reality of human affection, it had all the power and depth of divine grace. It was divine grace that Jesus should have such affections. On the other hand, nothing could be farther from the appreciation of this sovereign source of divine love, flowing through the perfect channel which it made for itself by its own power, than the pretension to express our love as reciprocal; it would be, on the contrary, to fail entirely in that appreciation. True saints among the Moravians have called Jesus "brother," and others have borrowed their hymns or the expression; the word never says so. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren," but it is quite another thing for us to call Him so. The personal dignity of Christ is never lost in the intensity and tenderness of His love.

But the rejected Savior was to be with the rich and the honorable in His death, however despised He may previously have been; and two, who

dared not confess Him while He lived, awakened now by the greatness of the sin of their nation, and by the event itself of His death — which the grace of God, who had reserved them for this work, made them feel — occupy themselves with the attentions due to His dead body. Joseph, himself a counsellor, comes to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus, Nicodemus joining with him to render the last honors to Him whom they had never followed during His life. We can understand this. To follow Jesus constantly under reproach, and compromise oneself for ever on His account, is a very different thing from acting when some great occasion happens in which there is no longer room for the former, and when the extent of the evil compels us to separate from it; and when the good, rejected because it is perfect in testimony, and perfected in its rejection, forced us to take a part, if through grace any moral sense exists in us. God thus fulfilled His words of truth. Joseph and Nicodemus place the Lord's body in a new sepulchre in a garden near the cross; for, on account of it being the Jews' preparation, they could do no more at that moment.

In CHAPTER 20 we have, in a summary of several of the leading facts among those which took place after the resurrection of Jesus, a picture of all the consequences of that great event, in immediate connection with the grace that produced them, and with the affections that ought to be seen in the faithful when again brought into relationship with the Lord; and at the same time, a picture of all God's ways up to the revelation of Christ to the remnant before the millennium. In chapter 21 the millennium is pictured to us.

Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons, appears first in the scene — a touching expression of the ways of God. She represents, I doubt not, the Jewish remnant of that day, personally attached to the Lord, but not knowing the power of resurrection. She is alone in her love: the very strength of her affection isolates her. She was not the only one saved, but she comes alone to seek — wrongly to seek, if you will, but to seek — Jesus, before the testimony of His glory shines forth in a world of darkness, because she loved Himself. She comes before the other women, while it was yet dark. It is a loving heart (we have already seen it in the believing women) occupied with Jesus, when the public testimony of man is still entirely wanting. And it is to this that Jesus first manifests Himself when He is risen. Nevertheless her heart knew where it would find a

response. She goes away to Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, when she does not find the body of Christ. Peter and the other disciple go, and find the proofs of a resurrection accomplished (as to Jesus Himself) with all the composure that became the power of God, great as the alarm might be that it created in the mind of man. There had been no haste; everything was in order: and Jesus was not there.

The two disciples, however, are not moved by the same attachment as that which filled her heart, who had been the object of so mighty a deliverance* on the Lord's part. They see, and, on these visible proofs, they believe. It was not a spiritual understanding of the thoughts of God by means of His word; they saw and believed. There is nothing in this which gathers the disciples together. Jesus was away; He had risen. They had satisfied themselves on this point, and they go away to their home. But Mary, led by affection rather than by intelligence, is not satisfied with coldly recognising that Jesus was again risen.** She thought Him still dead, because she did not possess Him. His death, the fact of her not finding Him again, added to the intensity of her affection, because He Himself was its object. All the tokens of this affection are produced here in the most touching manner. She supposes that the gardener must know who was in question without her telling him, for she only thought of one (as if I inquired of a beloved object in a family, "How is he?"). Bending over the sepulchre, she turns her head when He approaches; but then the Good Shepherd, risen from the dead, calls His sheep by her name; and the known and loved voice — mighty according to the grace which thus called her — instantly reveals Him to her who heard it. She turns to Him, and replies, "Rabbonimy Master."

[* "Seven demons." This represents the complete possession of this poor woman by the unclean spirits to whom she was a prey. It is the expression of the real state of the Jewish people.]

[** It is impossible to me, in giving great principles for the help of those who seek to understand the word, to develop all that is so deeply touching and interesting in this twentieth chapter, on which I have often pondered with (through grace) an ever-growing interest. This revelation of the Lord to the poor woman who could not do without her Savior, has a touching beauty, which every detail enhances. But there is one point of view to which I cannot but call the reader's attention. There are four conditions of soul presented here which, taken together, are very instructive, and each in the case of a believer: 1st. John and Peter, who see and believe, are really believers; but they do not see in Christ the only center of all the thoughts

of God, for His glory, for the world, for souls. Neither is He so for their affections, although they are believers. Having found that He was risen, they do without Him. Mary, who did not know this, who was even culpably ignorant, could nevertheless not do without Jesus. She must possess Himself. Peter and John go to their home; this is the center of their interests. They believe indeed, but self and home suffice them. 2nd. Thomas believes, and acknowledges with true orthodox faith, on incontestable proofs, that Jesus is his Lord and his God. He truly believes for himself. He has not the communications of the efficacy of the Lord's work, and of the relationship with His Father into which Jesus brings His own, the assembly. He has peace perhaps, but he has missed all the revelation of the assembly's position. How many souls-saved souls even — are there in these two conditions! — 3rd. Mary Magdalene is ignorant in the extreme. She does not know that Christ is risen. She has so little right sense of His being Lord and God, that she thinks some one might have taken away His body. But Christ is her all, the need of her soul, the only desire of her heart. Without Him she has no home, no Lord, no anything. Now to this need Jesus answers; it indicates the work of the Holy Ghost. He calls His sheep by her name, shows Himself to her first of all, teaches her that His presence was not now to be a Jewish bodily return to earth, that He must ascend to His Father, that the disciples were now His brethren, and that they were placed in the same position as Himself with His God and His Father — as Himself, the risen Man, ascended to His God and Father. All the glory of the new individual position is opened to her. — 4th. This gathers the disciples together. Jesus then brings them the peace which He has made, and they have the full joy of a present Savior who brings it them. He makes this peace (possessed by them in virtue of His work and His victory) their starting-point, sends them as the Father had sent Him, and imparts to them the Holy Ghost as the breath and power of life, that they may be able to bear that peace to others. — These are the communications of the efficacy of His work, as He had given to Mary that of the relationship to the Father which resulted from it. The whole is the answer to Mary's attachment to Christ, or what resulted from it. If through grace there is affection, the answer will assuredly be granted. It is the truth which flows from the work of Christ. No other state than that which Christ here presents is in accordance with what He has done, and with the Father's love. He cannot, by His work, place us in any other.]

But while thus revealing Himself to the beloved remnant, whom He had delivered, all is changed in their position and in His relationship with them. He was not going now to dwell bodily in the midst of His people on earth. He did not come back to re-establish the kingdom in Israel. "Touch me not," says He to Mary. But by redemption He had wrought a far more important thing. He had placed them in the same position as Himself with His Father and His God; and He calls them — which He never had, and never could have done before — His brethren. Until His death the corn of wheat remained alone. Pure and perfect, the Son of God, He could not

stand in the same relationship to God as the sinner; but, in the glorious position which He was going to resume as man, He could, through redemption, associate with Himself His redeemed ones, cleansed, regenerated, and adopted in Him.

He sends them word of the new position they were to have in common with Himself. He says to Mary, "Touch me not; but go to my brethren, and tell them that I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." The will of the Father — accomplished by means of the glorious work of the Son, who, as man, has taken His place, apart from sin, with His God and Father — and the work of the Son, the source of eternal life to them, have brought the disciples into the same position as Himself before the Father.

The testimony born to this truth gathers the disciples together. They meet with closed doors, unprotected now by the care and power of Jesus, the Messiah, Jehovah on earth. But if they had no longer the shelter of the Messiah's presence, they have Jesus in their midst, bringing them that which they could not have before His death — "Peace."

But He did not bring them this blessing merely as their own portion. Having given them proofs of His resurrection, and that in His body He was the same Jesus, He sets them in this perfect peace as the starting point of their mission. The Father, eternal and infinite fountain of love, had sent the Son, who abode in it, who was the witness of that love, and of the peace which He, the Father, shed around Himself, where sin had no existence. Rejected in His mission, Jesus had — on behalf of a world where sin existed — made peace for all who should receive the testimony of the grace which had made it; and He now sends His disciples from the bosom of that peace into which He had brought them, by the remission of sins through His death, to bear testimony to it in the world.

He says again, "Peace be unto you," to send them forth into the world clothed and filled with that peace, their feet shod with it, even as the Father had sent Him. He gives them the Holy Ghost for this end, that according to His power they might bear the remission of sins to a world that was bowed down under the yoke of sin.

I do not doubt that, speaking historically, the Spirit here is distinguished from Acts 2, inasmuch as here it is a breath of inward life, as God breathed into the nostrils of Adam a breath of life. It is not the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Thus Christ, who is a quickening Spirit, imparts spiritual life to them according to the power of resurrection.* As to the general picture figuratively presented in the passage, it is the Spirit bestowed on the saints gathered by the testimony of His being risen and His going to the Father, as the whole scene represents the assembly in its present privileges. Thus we have the remnant attached to Christ by love; believers individually recognised as children of God, and in the same position before Him as Christ; and then the assembly founded on this testimony, gathered together with Jesus in the midst, in the enjoyment of peace; and its members, individually constituted, in connection with the peace which Christ has made, a witness to the world of the remission of sins — its administration being committed to them.

[* Compare Romans 4-8 and Colossians 2 and 3. Resurrection was the power of life which brought them out of the dominion of sin, that had its end in death, and that was condemned in the death of Jesus, and they dead to it, but not condemned by it, sin having been condemned in His death. This is a question, not of guilt, but of state. Our guilt, blessed be God, was put away too. But here we die with Christ, and resurrection presents us (Romans, as quoted, unfolds the side of death; Colossians adds resurrection. Romans is death to sin, Colossians to the world) living before God in a life in which Jesus — and we by Him — appeared in His presence according to the perfection of divine righteousness. But this supposed His work also.]

Thomas represents the Jews in the last days, who will believe when they see. Blessed are they who have believed without seeing. But the faith of Thomas is not concerned with the position of sonship. He acknowledges, as the remnant will do, that Jesus is his Lord and his God. He was not with them in their first church gathering.

The Lord here, by His actions, consecrates the first day of the week for His meeting together with His own, in spirit here below.

The evangelist is far from exhausting all that there was to relate of that which Jesus did. The object of that which he has related is linked with the communication of eternal life in Christ; first, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and, second, that in believing we have life through His name. To this the Gospel is consecrated.

The next chapter, while rendering a fresh testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, gives us — to verse 13a picture of the millennial work of Christ; from thence to the end, the especial portions of Peter and John in connection with their service to Christ. The application is limited to the earth, for they had known Jesus on earth. It is Paul who will give us the heavenly position of Christ and the assembly. But he has no place here.

CHAPTER 21. Led by Peter, several of the apostles go a fishing. The Lord meets them in the same circumstances as those in which He found them at the beginning, and reveals Himself to them in the same manner. John at once understands that it is the Lord. Peter, with his usual energy, casts himself into the sea to reach Him.

Observe here, that we find ourselves again upon the ground of the historic Gospels — that is to say, that the miracle of the draught of fishes identifies itself with the work of Christ on earth, and is in the sphere of His former association with His disciples. It is Galilee, not Bethany. It has not the usual character of the doctrine of this Gospel, which presents the divine Person of Jesus, outside all dispensation, here below; raising our thoughts above all such subjects. Here (at the end of the Gospel and of the sketch given in chapter 20 of the result of the manifestation of His divine Person and of His work) the evangelist comes for the first time on the ground of the synoptics, of the manifestation and coming fruits of Christ's connection with earth. Thus the application of the passage to this point is not merely an idea which the narrative suggests to the mind, but it rests upon the general teaching of the word.

Still there is a notable difference between that which took place at the beginning and here. In the former scene the ships began to sink, the nets broke. Not so here, and the Holy Ghost marks this circumstance as distinctive: Christ's millennial work is not marred. He is there after His resurrection, and that which He performs does not rest, in itself, on man's responsibility as to its effect here below: the net does not break. Also, when the disciples bring the fish which they had caught, the Lord has some already there. So shall it be on earth at the end. Before His manifestation He will have prepared a remnant for Himself on the earth; but after His manifestation He will gather a multitude also from the sea of nations.

Another idea presents itself. Christ is again as in companionship with His disciples. "Come," says He, "and dine." There is no question here of heavenly things, but of the renewing of His connection with His people in the kingdom. All this does not immediately belong to the subject of this Gospel, which leads us higher. Accordingly it is introduced in a mysterious and symbolical manner. This appearance of Christ's is spoken of as His third manifestation. I doubt His manifestation on earth before His death being included in the number. I would rather apply it to that which, first, after His resurrection, gave rise to the gathering together of the saints as an assembly; secondly, to a revelation of Himself to the Jews after the manner of that which is presented in the Song of Songs; and lastly here to the public display of His power, when He shall already have gathered the remnant together. His appearing like the lightning is outside all these things. Historically the three appearances were — the day of His resurrection; the following first day of the week; and His appearance at the sea of Galilee.

Afterwards, in a passage full of ineffable grace, He entrusts Peter with the care of His sheep (that is, I doubt not, of His Jewish sheep; he is the apostle of the circumcision), and leaves to John an indefinite period of sojourn upon earth. His words apply much more to their ministry than to their persons, with the exception of one verse referring to Peter. But this demands a little more development.

The Lord begins with the full restoration of Peter's soul. He does not reproach him with his fault, but judges the source of evil that produced itself-confidence. Peter had declared, that if all should deny Jesus, yet he at least would not deny Him. The Lord therefore asks him, "Lovest thou me more than do these?" and Peter is reduced to acknowledge that it required the omniscience of God to know that he, who had boasted of having more love than all others for Jesus, had really any affection for Him at all. And the question thrice repeated must indeed have searched the depths of his heart. Nor was it till the third time that he says, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus did not let his conscience go until he had come to this. Nevertheless the grace which did this for Peter's good — the grace which had followed him in spite of everything, praying for him before he felt his need or had committed the fault — is perfect here also. For, at the moment when it might be thought that at the utmost he would

be re-admitted through divine forbearance, the strongest testimony of grace is lavished upon him. When humbled by his fall, and brought to entire dependence upon grace, all-abounding grace displays itself. The Lord commits that which He most loved to him — the sheep whom He had just redeemed. He commits them to Peter's care. This is the grace which surmounts all that man is, which is above all that man is; which consequently produces confidence, not in self, but in God, as One whose grace can always be trusted in, as being full of grace and perfect in that grace which is above everything, and is always itself; grace which makes us able to accomplish the work of grace towards — whom? — man who needs it. It creates confidence in proportion to the measure in which it acts.

I think that the Lord's words apply to the sheep already known to Peter; and with whom only Jesus had been in daily connection; who would naturally be before His mind, and that in the scene which we see this chapter puts before us — the sheep of the house of Israel.

It appears to me that there is progression in that which the Lord says to Peter. He asks, "Lovest thou me more than do these?" Peter says, "Thou knowest that I have affection for thee." Jesus replies, "Feed my lambs." The second time He says only, "Lovest thou me?" omitting the comparison between Peter and the rest, and his former pretension. Peter repeats the declaration of his affection. Jesus says to him, "Shepherd my sheep." The third time He says, "Hast thou affection for me?" using Peter's own expression; and on Peter's replying, as we have seen, seizing this use of his words by the Lord, He says, "Feed my sheep." The links between Peter and Christ known on earth made him fit to pasture the flock of the Jewish remnant — to feed the lambs, by showing them the Messiah as He had been, and to act as a shepherd, in guiding those that were more advanced, and in supplying them with food.

But the grace of the loving Savior did not stop here. Peter might still feel the sorrow of having missed such an opportunity of confessing the Lord at the critical moment. Jesus assures him that if he had failed in doing so of his own will, he should be allowed to do it by the will of God; and as when young he girded himself, others should gird him when old and carry him whither he would not. It should be given him by the will of God to die for

the Lord, as he had formerly declared himself ready to do in his own strength. Now also that Peter was humbled and brought entirely under grace — that he knew he had no strength — that he felt his dependence on the Lord, his utter inefficiency if he trusted to his own power — now, I repeat, the Lord calls Peter to follow Him; which he had pretended to do, when the Lord had told him he could not. It was this that his heart desired. Feeding those whom Jesus had continued to feed until His death, he should see Israel reject everything, even as Christ had seen them do; and his own work end, even as Christ had seen His work end (the judgment ready to fall, and beginning at the house of God). Finally, what he had pretended to do and could not, he would now do — follow Christ to prison and to death.

Then comes the history of the disciple whom Jesus loved. John having, no doubt, heard the call addressed to Peter, follows also himself; and Peter, linked with him, as we have seen, by their common love to the Lord, inquires what should happen to him likewise. The Lord's answer announces the portion and ministry of John, but, as it appears to me, in connection with the earth. But the Lord's enigmatical expression is, nevertheless, as remarkable as it is important: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" They thought, in consequence, that John would not die. The Lord did not say so — a warning not to ascribe a meaning to His words, instead of receiving one; and at the same time showing our need of the Holy Spirit's help; for the words literally might be so taken. Giving heed myself, I trust, to this warning, I will say what I think to be the meaning of the Lord's words, which I do not doubt to be so — a meaning which gives a key to many other expressions of the same kind.

In the narrative of the Gospel, we are in connection with the earth (that is, the connection of Jesus with the earth). As planted on earth at Jerusalem, the assembly, as the house of God, is formally recognised as taking the place of the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The history of the assembly, as thus formally established as a center on earth, ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. The remnant saved by the Messiah was no longer to be in connection with Jerusalem, the center of the gathering of the Gentiles. In this sense the destruction of Jerusalem put an end judicially to the new system of God upon earth — a system promulgated by Peter

(Acts 3); with regard to which Stephen declared to the Jews their resistance to the Holy Ghost, and was sent, as it were, as a messenger after Him who was gone to receive the kingdom and to return; while Paul — elected from among those enemies of the good news still addressed to the Jews by the Holy Ghost after the death of Christ, and separated from Jews and Gentiles, in order to be sent to the latter — performs a new work that was hidden from the prophets of old, namely, the gathering out of a heavenly assembly without distinction of Jew or Gentile.

The destruction of Jerusalem put an end to one of these systems, and to the existence of Judaism according to the law and the promises, leaving only the heavenly assembly. John remained — the last of the twelve — until this period, and after Paul, in order to watch over the assembly as established on that footing, that is, as the organised and earthly frame-work (responsible in that character) of the testimony of God, and the subject of His government on the earth. But this is not all. In his ministry John went on to the end, to the coming of Christ in judgment to the earth; and he has linked the judgment of the assembly, as the responsible witness on earth, with the judgment of the world, when God shall resume His connection with the earth in government (the testimony of the assembly being finished, and it having been caught up, according to its proper character, to be with the Lord in heaven).

Thus the Apocalypse presents the judgment of the assembly on earth, as the formal witness for the truth; and then passes on to God's resumption of the government of the earth, in view of the establishment of the Lamb upon the throne, and the setting aside of the power of evil. The heavenly character of the assembly is only found there, when its members are exhibited on thrones as kings and priests, and when the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven. The earth — after the Seven Churches — has no longer the heavenly testimony. It is not the subject, either in the seven assemblies, or in the properly so-called prophetic part. Thus, taking the assemblies as such in those days, the assembly according to Paul is not seen there. Taking the assemblies as descriptions of the assembly, the subject of God's government on earth, we have it until its final rejection; and the history is continuous, and the prophetic part immediately connected with the end of the assembly: only, in place of it, we have the world and then the Jews.*

[* Thus we have in the ministerial life, and in the teaching, of Peter and John, the whole religious earthly history from the beginning to the end; commencing with the Jews in continuation of the relations of Christ with them, traversing the whole christian epoch, and finding itself again, after the close of the earthly history of the assembly, on the ground of God's relationship to the world (comprising the Jewish remnant) in view of the introduction of the First-born into the world (the last glorious event terminating the history which began with His rejection). Paul is on very different ground. He sees the assembly, as the body of Christ, united to Him in heaven.]

The coming of Christ therefore, which is spoken of at the end of the Gospel, is His manifestation on earth; and John, who lived in person until the close of all that was introduced by the Lord in connection with Jerusalem, continues here, in his ministry, until the manifestation of Christ to the world.

In John, then, we have two things. On the one hand, his ministry, as far as connected with dispensation and with the ways of God, does not go beyond that which is earthly: the coming of Christ, is His manifestation to complete those ways, and to establish the government of God. On the other hand, he links us with the Person of Jesus, who is above and outside all dispensations, and all the dealings of God, save as being the manifestation of God Himself. John does not enter upon the ground of the assembly as Paul sets it forth. It is either Jesus personally, or the relations of God with the earth.* His epistle presents the reproduction of the life of Christ in ourselves, guarding us thus from all pretensions of perverse teachers. But by these two parts of the truth, we have a precious sustainment of faith given to us, when all that belongs to the body of testimony may fail: Jesus, personally the object of faith in whom we know God; the life itself of God, reproduced in us, as being quickened by Christ. This is for ever true, and this is eternal life, if we were alone without the assembly on earth: and it leads us over its ruins, in possession of that which is essential, and of that which will abide for ever. The government of God will decide all the rest: only it is our privilege and duty to maintain Paul's part of the testimony of God, as long as through grace we can.

[* John presents the Father manifested in the Son, God declared by the Son in the bosom of the Father, and that withal as eternal life — God to us, and life. Paul is employed to reveal our presentation to God in Him. Though each alludes in passing to the other point, one is characterised by the presentation of God to us, and eternal life given, the other, by our presentation to God.]

Remark also that the work of Peter and Paul is that of gathering together, whether it be in circumcision or the Gentiles. John is conservative, maintaining that which is essential in eternal life. He relates the judgment of God in connection with the world, but as a subject that is outside his own relations with God, which are given as an introduction and exordium to the Apocalypse. He follows Christ when Peter is called, because, although Peter was occupied, as Christ had been, with the call of the Jews, John — without being called to that work — followed Him on the same ground. The Lord explains it, as we have seen.

Verses 24, 25 are a kind of inscription on the book. John has not related all that Jesus did, but that which revealed Him as everlasting life. As to His works, they could not be numbered.

Here, thanks be to God, are these four precious books laid open, as far as God has enabled me to do so, in their great principles. Meditation on their contents in detail, I must leave to each individual heart, assisted by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost; for if studied in detail, one might almost say with the apostle that the world would not contain the books that should be written. May God in His grace lead souls into the enjoyment of the inexhaustible streams of grace and truth in Jesus which they contain!