

CHAPTER 1

The scope and design of this chapter is to confirm our faith in Christ as the eternal Son of God, and the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, that we may be brought to receive him, and rely upon him, as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and to give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. In order to this, we have here,

I. An account given of him by the inspired penman himself, fairly laying down, in the beginning, what he designed his whole book should be the proof of (v. 1-5); and again (v. 10-14); and again, (v. 16-18).

II. The testimony of John Baptist concerning him (v. 6-9, and v. 15); but most fully and particularly (v. 19-37).

III. His own manifestation of himself to Andrew and Peter (v. 38-42), to Philip and Nathanael (v. 43-51).

◀▶ JOHN 1:1-5

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

Austin says (*de Civitate Dei*, lib. 10, cap. 29) that his friend Simplicius told him he had heard a Platonic philosopher say that these first verses of St. John's gospel were *worthy to be written in letters of gold*. The learned Francis Junius, in the account he gives of his own life, tells how he was in his youth infected with loose notions in religion, and by the grace of God was wonderfully recovered by reading accidentally these verses in a bible which his father had designedly laid in his way. He says that he observed such a divinity in the argument, such an authority and majesty in the style, that his flesh trembled, and he was struck with such amazement that for a whole day he scarcely knew where he was or what he did; and thence he dates the beginning of his being religious. Let us enquire what there is in those strong lines. The evangelist here lays down the great truth he is to prove, that Jesus Christ is God, one with the Father. Observe,

I. Of whom he speaks — *The Word* — *ho logos*. This is an idiom peculiar to John's writings. See ^{<601>}1 John 1:1; 5:7; ^{<603>}Revelation 19:13. Yet some think that Christ is meant by *the Word* in ^{<602>}Acts 20:32; ^{<604>}Hebrews 4:12; ^{<605>}Luke 1:2. The Chaldee paraphrase very frequently calls the Messiah *Memra* — *the Word of Jehovah*, and speaks of many things in the Old Testament, said to be done by *the Lord*, as done by that *Word of the Lord*. Even the vulgar Jews were taught that the *Word of God* was the same with God. The evangelist, in the close of his discourse (v. 18), plainly tells us why he calls Christ *the Word* — *because he is the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and has declared him*. *Word* is two-fold: *logos endiathetos* — *word conceived*; and *logos prophorikos* — *word uttered*. The *logos ho eso* and *ho exo*, *ratio* and *oratio* — *intelligence* and *utterance*.

1. There is the *word conceived*, that is, *thought*, which is the first and only immediate product and conception of the soul (all the operations of which are performed by *thought*), and it is one with the soul. And thus the second person in the Trinity is fitly called *the Word*; for he is the *first-begotten of the Father*, that eternal essential Wisdom which *the Lord possessed*, as the soul does its thought, *in the beginning of his way*, ^{<602>}Proverbs 8:22. There is nothing we are more sure of than *that we think*, yet nothing we are more in the dark about than *how we think*; who can declare the generation of *thought* in the soul? Surely then the generations and births of the eternal mind may well be allowed to be great mysteries of godliness, the bottom of which we cannot fathom, while yet we adore the depth.

2. There is the *word uttered*, and this is *speech*, the chief and most natural indication of the mind. And thus Christ is *the Word*, for *by him* God has in *these last days spoken to us* (^{<602>}Hebrews 1:2), and has directed us to *hear him*, ^{<605>}Matthew 17:5. He has made known God's mind to us, as a man's word or speech makes known his thoughts, as far as he pleases, and no further. Christ is called that *wonderful speaker* (see notes on ^{<603>}Daniel 8:13), the *speaker of things hidden and strange*. He is *the Word* speaking *from God* to us, and *to God* for us. John Baptist was *the voice*, but Christ *the Word*: being *the Word*, he is *the Truth*, the *Amen*, the *faithful Witness* of the mind of God.

II. What he saith of him, enough to prove beyond contradiction that *he is God*. He asserts,

1. His existence in the beginning: *In the beginning was the Word.* This bespeaks his existence, not only before his incarnation, but before all time. The beginning of time, in which all creatures were produced and brought into being, found this eternal Word in being. The world was *from* the beginning, but the Word was *in* the beginning. Eternity is usually expressed by being *before the foundation of the world.* The eternity of God is so described (^{<191D>}Psalm 90:2), *Before the mountains were brought forth.* So ^{<10B3>}Proverbs 8:23. The Word had a being before the world had a beginning. He that *was* in the beginning *never* began, and therefore was *ever*, *achronos* — *without beginning of time.* So Nonnus.

2. His co-existence with the Father: *The Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Let none say that when we invite them to Christ we would draw them from God, for Christ is *with God* and *is God*; it is repeated in v. 2: *the same*, the very same that we believe in and preach, was *in the beginning with God*, that is, he was so from eternity. In the beginning the world was *from God*, as it was created by him; but the Word was *with God*, as ever with him. The Word was with God,

(1.) In respect of *essence* and *substance*; for *the Word was God*: a distinct person or substance, for he was *with God*; and yet the same in substance, for he *was God*, ^{<30B>}Hebrews 1:3.

(2.) In respect of *complacency* and *felicity*. There was a glory and happiness which Christ had *with God* before the world was (^{<87D>}John 17:5), the Son infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his Father's bosom, and no less the Father's delight, the Son of his love, ^{<10B0>}Proverbs 8:30.

(3.) In respect of *counsel* and *design*. The mystery of man's redemption by this Word incarnate was *hid in God* before all worlds, ^{<40B>}Ephesians 3:9. He that undertook to *bring us to God* (^{<10B5>}1 Peter 3:18) was himself from eternity *with God*; so that this grand affair of man's reconciliation to God was concerted between the Father and Son from eternity, and they understand one another perfectly well in it, ^{<36B>}Zechariah 6:13; ^{<11Z>}Matthew 11:27. He was *by him as one brought up with him* for this service, ^{<10B0>}Proverbs 8:30. He was *with God*, and therefore is said to *come forth from the Father*.

3. His agency in making the world, v. 3. This is here,

(1.) Expressly asserted: *All things were made by him*. He was *with God*, not only so as to be *acquainted* with the divine counsels from eternity, but to be *active* in the divine operations in the beginning of time. *Then was I by him*, ^{<308>}Proverbs 8:30. God made the world *by a word* (^{<336>}Psalm 33:6) and Christ was *the Word*. By him, not as a subordinate instrument, but as a co-ordinate agent, God *made the world* (^{<302>}Hebrews 1:2), not as the workman cuts by his axe, but as the body sees by the eye.

(2.) The contrary is denied: *Without him was not any thing made that was made*, from the highest angel to the meanest worm. God the Father did nothing without him in that work. Now,

[1.] This proves that *he is God*; for he that *built all things is God*, ^{<338>}Hebrews 3:4. The God of Israel often proved himself to be God with this, that he *made all things*: ^{<302>}Isaiah 40:12, 28; 41:4; and see ^{<201>}Jeremiah 10:11, 12.

[2.] This proves the excellency of the Christian religion, that the author and founder of it is the same that was the author and founder of the world. How excellent must that constitution needs be which derives its institution from him who is the fountain of all excellency! When we worship Christ, we worship him to whom the patriarchs gave honour as the Creator of the world, and on whom all creatures depend.

[3.] This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation. Help was laid upon one that was mighty indeed; for it was laid upon him that made all things; and he is appointed the author of our bliss who was the author of our being.

4. The original of life and light that is in him: *In him was life*, v. 4. This further proves that he is God, and every way qualified for his undertaking; for,

(1.) He has *life in himself*; not only the *true God*, but the *living God*. God is life; he swears by himself when he saith, *As I live*.

(2.) All living creatures have their life in him; not only all the *matter* of the creation was *made* by him, but all the *life* too that is in the creation is derived from him and supported by him. It was the Word of God that produced the *moving creatures that had life*, ^{<100>}Genesis 1:20; ^{<475>}Acts 17:25. He is that Word by which man lives more than by bread, ^{<100>}Matthew 4:4.

(3.) Reasonable creatures have their *light* from him; that *life* which is the *light of men* comes from him. Life in man is something greater and nobler than it is in other creatures; it is *rational*, and not merely *animal*. When man became a *living soul*, his life was *light*, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above, the beasts that perish. The *spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man, who lies so much under the power of *death* and *darkness*, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him who gave us the light of human reason? And if, when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how readily should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us *eternal life*, and *that life too is in his Son!*

5. The manifestation of him to the children of men. It might be objected, If this eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little taken notice of and regarded? To this he answers (v. 5), *The light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not.* Observe,

(1.) The discovery of the eternal Word to the lapsed world, even before he was manifested in the flesh: *The light shineth in darkness.* Light is self-evidencing, and will make itself known; this light, whence the light of men comes, hath shone, and doth shine.

[1.] The eternal Word, *as God*, shines in the *darkness of natural conscience.* Though men by the fall are become *darkness*, yet that which may be known of God is manifested in them; see ^{<41B>}Romans 1:19, 20. The light of nature is this light shining in darkness. Something of the power of the divine Word, both as *creating* and as *commanding*, all mankind have an innate sense of; were it not for this, earth would be a hell, a place of *utter darkness*; blessed be God, it is not so yet.

[2.] The eternal Word, as Mediator, shone in the darkness of the Old-Testament types and figures, and the prophecies and promises which were of the Messiah from the beginning. He that had commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness was himself long a light *shining in darkness*; there was a *veil* upon this *light*, ^{<41B>}2 Corinthians 3:13.

(2.) The disability of the degenerate world to receive this discovery: *The darkness comprehended it not*; the most of men received the grace of God in these discoveries in vain.

[1.] The world of mankind *comprehended not* the natural light that was in their understandings, but became *vain in their imaginations* concerning the eternal God and the eternal Word, ^{<412>}Romans 1:21, 28. The darkness of error and sin overpowered and quite eclipsed this light. God *spoke once, yea twice*, but *man perceived it not*, ^{<334>}Job 33:14.

[2.] The Jews, who had the light of the Old Testament, yet comprehended not Christ in it. As there was a veil upon Moses's face, so there was upon the people's hearts. In the *darkness* of the types and shadows the light shone; but such as the *darkness* of their understandings that they could not *see* it. It was therefore requisite that Christ should come, both to rectify the errors of the Gentile world and to improve the truths of the Jewish church.

^{<416>}JOHN 1:6-14

CHRIST'S INCARNATION

The evangelist designs to bring in John Baptist bearing an honourable testimony to Jesus Christ, Now in these verses, before he does this,

I. He gives us some account of the witness he is about to produce. His name was *John*, which signifies *gracious*; his conversation was austere, but he was not the less *gracious*. Now,

1. We are here told concerning him, in general, that he was a *man sent of God*. The evangelist had said concerning Jesus Christ that he was *with God* and that he *was God*; but here concerning John that he was a *man*, a mere man. God is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves. John was a *great man*, but he was a man, a son of man; he was *sent from God*, he was God's *messenger*, so he is called, ^{<301>}Malachi 3:1. God gave him both his mission and his message, both his credentials and his instructions. John wrought no miracle, nor do we find that he had visions and revelations; but the strictness and purity of his life and doctrine, and the direct tendency of both to reform the world, and to revive the interests of God's kingdom among men, were plain indications that he was *sent of God*.

2. We are here told what his office and business were (v. 7): *The same came for a witness*, an eye-witness, a leading witness. He came *eis martyrian* — *for a testimony*. The legal institutions had been long a testimony for God in the Jewish church. By them revealed religion was kept up; hence we read of the *tabernacle of the testimony*, *the ark of the testimony*, *the law and the testimony*: but now divine revelation is to be turned into another channel; now the testimony of Christ is the testimony of God, ^{<406>}1 Corinthians 1:6; 2:1. Among the Gentiles, God indeed had not left himself without witness (^{<447>}Acts 14:17), but the Redeemer had no testimonies borne him among them. There was a profound silence concerning him, till John Baptist came for a witness to him. Now observe,

(1.) The matter of his testimony: *He came to bear witness to the light*. Light is a thing which witnesses for itself, and carries its own evidence along with it; but to those who shut their eyes against the light it is necessary there should be those that bear witness to it. Christ's light needs not man's testimony, but the world's darkness does. John was like the night watchman that goes round the town, proclaiming the approach of the morning light to those that have closed their eyes, and are not willing themselves to observe it; or like that watchman that was set to tell those who asked him what of the night that *the morning comes*, and, *if you will enquire, enquire ye*, ^{<2911>}Isaiah 21:11, 12. He was sent of God to tell the world that the long-looked-for Messiah was now come, who should be *a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel*; and to proclaim that dispensation at hand which would bring life and immortality to light.

(2.) The design of his testimony: *That all men through him might believe*; not in him, but in Christ, whose way he was sent to prepare. He taught men to look through him, and pass through him, to Christ; through the doctrine of repentance for sin to that of faith in Christ. He prepared men for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel, by awakening them to a sight and sense of sin; and that, their eyes being thereby opened, they might be ready to admit those beams of divine light which, in the person and doctrine of the Messiah, were now ready to shine in their faces. If they would but receive this witness of man, they would soon find that the witness of God was greater, ^{<683>}1 John 5:9. See ^{<804>}John 10:41. Observe, it was designed that all men through him might believe, excluding none from the kind and beneficial influences of his ministry that

did not exclude themselves, as multitudes did, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and so received the grace of God in vain.

3. We are here cautioned not to mistake him for the light who only came to bear witness to it (v. 8): *He was not that light* that was expected and promised, but only was sent to bear witness of that great and ruling light. He was a star, like that which guided the wise men to Christ, a morning star; but he was not the Sun; not the Bridegroom, but a friend of the Bridegroom; not the Prince, but his harbinger. There were those who rested in John's baptism, and looked no further, as those Ephesians, ~~400~~ Acts 19:3. To rectify this mistake, the evangelist here, when he speaks very honourably of him, yet shows that he must give place to Christ. He was great as the prophet of the Highest, but not the Highest himself. Note, We must take heed of over-valuing ministers, as well as of under-valuing them; they are not our lords, nor have they dominion over our faith, but ministers by whom we believe, stewards of our Lord's house. We must not give up ourselves by an implicit faith to their conduct, for they are not that light; but we must attend to, and receive, their testimony; for they are sent to bear witness of that light; so then let us esteem them, and not otherwise. Had John pretended to be that light he had not been so much as a faithful witness of that light. Those who usurp the honour of Christ forfeit the honour of being the servants of Christ; yet John was very serviceable as a witness to the light, though he was not that light. Those may be of great use to us who yet shine with a borrowed light.

II. Before he goes on with John's testimony, he returns to give us a further account of this Jesus to whom John bore record. Having shown in the beginning of the chapter the glories of his Godhead, he here comes to show the graces of his incarnation, and his favours to man as Mediator.

1. Christ was the *true Light* (v. 9); not as if John Baptist were a false light, but, in comparison with Christ, he was a very small light. Christ is the great light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called so: Christ is the true light. The fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true light. He is the true light, for proof of which we are not referred to the emanations of his glory in the invisible world (the beams with which he enlightens that), but to those rays of his light which are darted downwards, and with which this dark world of ours is enlightened. But how does Christ enlighten every man that comes into the world?

(1.) By his creating power he enlightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ.

(2.) By the publication of his gospel to all nations he does in effect enlighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true light, for he is a light to enlighten the Gentiles. His everlasting gospel is to be preached to every nation and language, ^{<646>}Revelation 14:6. Like the sun which enlightens every man that will open his eyes, and receive its light (^{<696>}Psalms 19:6), to which the preaching of the gospel is compared. See ^{<618>}Romans 10:18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined, as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people, ^{<405>}Matthew 5:15.

(3.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace he enlightens all those that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him perish in darkness. *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God* is said to be *in the face of Jesus Christ*, and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commanded to shine out of darkness, and which enlightens every man that comes into the world. Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

2. Christ *was in the world*, v. 10. He was in the world, as the essential Word, before his incarnation, upholding all things; but this speaks of his being in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us; see ^{<658>}John 16:28. *I am come into the world*. The Son of the Highest was here in this *lower* world; that *light* in this *dark* world; that *holy thing* in this sinful polluted world. He left a world of bliss and glory, and was here in this melancholy miserable world. He undertook to reconcile the world to God, and therefore was *in the world*, to treat about it, and settle that affair; to satisfy God's justice for the world, and discover God's favour to the world. He was in the world, but not of it, and speaks with an air of triumph when he can say, *Now I am no more in it*, ^{<671>}John 17:11. The greatest honour that ever was put upon this world, which is so mean and inconsiderable a part of the universe, was that the Son of God was once *in the world*; and, as it should engage our affections to things above that there Christ is, so it should reconcile us to our present abode in *this* world that once Christ was *here*. He *was* in the world for awhile, but it is spoken

of as a thing past; and so it will be said of us shortly, We were in the world. O that when we are here no more we may be where Christ is! Now observe here,

(1.) What reason Christ had to expect the most affectionate and respectful welcome possible in this world; for *the world was made by him*. Therefore he came to save a lost world because it was a world of his own making. Why should he not concern himself to revive the light that was of his own kindling, to restore a life of his own infusing, and to renew the image that was originally of his own impressing? The world was *made by him*, and therefore ought to do him homage.

(2.) What cold entertainment he met with, notwithstanding: *The world knew him not*. The great Maker, Ruler, and Redeemer of the world was in it, and few or none of the inhabitants of the world were aware of it. The *ox knows his owner*, but the more brutish world did not. They did not own him, did not bid him welcome, because they did not *know him*; and they did not know him because he did not make himself known in the way that they expected — in external glory and majesty. His kingdom came not *with observation*, because it was to be a kingdom of trial and probation. When he shall come as a Judge the world shall *know* him.

3. He *came to his own* (v. 11); not only to the world, which was *his own*, but to the people of Israel, that were peculiarly *his own* above all people; of them he came, among them he lived, and to them he was *first sent*. The Jews were at this time a mean despicable people; *the crown was fallen from their head*; yet, in remembrance of the ancient covenant, bad as they were, and poor as they were, Christ was not ashamed to look upon them as his own. *Ta idia* — his own *things*; not *tous idious* — his own *persons*, as *true believers* are called, ~~EBB~~ John 13:1. The Jews were *his*, as a man's house, and lands, and goods are *his*, which he uses and possesses; but believers are his as a man's wife and children are his own, which he loves and enjoys. He came to his own, to seek and save them, because they were *his own*. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for it was he whose own the sheep were. Now observe,

(1.) That the generality *rejected* him: *His own received him not*. He had reason to expect that those who were his own should have bidden him welcome, considering how great the *obligations* were which they *lay under* to him, and how fair the *opportunities* were which they had of coming to the knowledge of him. They had the oracles of God, which told

them beforehand *when* and *where* to expect him, and of what tribe and family he should arise. He came among them himself, introduced with signs and wonders, and himself the greatest; and therefore it is not said of them, as it was of the world (v. 10), that they *knew him not*; but *his own*, though they could not but know him, yet *received him not*; did not receive his doctrine, did not welcome him as the Messiah, but fortified themselves against him. The *chief priests*, that were in a particular manner *his own* (for the Levites were God's tribe), were ring-leaders in this contempt put upon him. Now this was very *unjust*, because they were *his own*, and therefore he might *command* their respect; and it was very *unkind* and *ungrateful*, because he came to them, to seek and save them, and so to *court* their respect. Note, Many who in profession are *Christ's own*, yet do not *receive him*, because they will not part with their sins, nor have him to *reign over them*.

(2.) That yet there was a remnant who *owned* him, and were faithful to him. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that *received* him (v. 12): *But as many as received him. Though Israel were not gathered*, yet Christ was *glorious*. Though the body of that nation persisted and perished in unbelief, yet there were many of *them* that were wrought upon to submit to Christ, and many more that *were not of that fold*. Observe here,

[1.] The true Christian's *description* and *property*; and that is, that he *receives Christ*, and *believes on his name*; the latter explains the former. Note, *First*, To be a Christian indeed is to *believe on Christ's name*; it is to *assent* to the gospel discovery, and *consent* to the gospel proposal, concerning him. His name is *the Word of God; the King of kings, the Lord our righteousness; Jesus a Saviour*. Now to *believe* on his name is to *acknowledge* that he is what these great names bespeak him to be, and to *acquiesce* in it, that he may be so *to us*. *Secondly*, Believing in Christ's name is *receiving* him as a gift from God. We must receive his doctrine as true and good; receive his law as just and holy; receive his offers as kind and advantageous; and we must receive the image of his grace, and impressions of his love, as the governing principle of our affections and actions.

[2.] The true Christian's dignity and privilege are twofold: —

First, The *privilege of adoption*, which takes them into the number of God's children: *To them gave he power to become the sons of God*.

Hitherto, the adoption pertained to the Jews only (*Israel is my son, my first-born*); but now, by faith in Christ, Gentiles are the *children of God*, ⁴⁸⁸Galatians 3:26. They have *power, exousian* — *authority*; for no man taketh this power to himself, but he who is *authorized* by the gospel charter. To them gave he a *right*; to them gave he this pre-eminence. *This power have all the saints*. Note,

1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all good Christians, that they are become the *children of God*. They were by nature children of wrath, children of this world. If they be the *children of God*, they *become* so, are *made* so *Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani* — *Persons are not born Christians, but made such*. — Tertullian. *Behold what manner of love is this*, ⁴⁸⁹1 John 3:1. God calls them *his children*, they call him *Father*, and are entitled to all the privileges of children, those of their way and those of their home.

2. The privilege of adoption is entirely owing to *Jesus Christ*; he *gave* this power to them that believe on his name. God is his Father, and so ours; and it is by virtue of our espousals to him, and union with him, that we stand related to God as a Father. It was in Christ that we were *predestinated to the adoption*; from him we receive both the character and the Spirit of adoption, and he is the *first-born among many brethren*. The Son of God became a Son of man, that the sons and daughters of men might become the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

Secondly, The privilege of regeneration (v. 13): *Which were born*. Note, All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted are regenerated. This *real* change evermore attends that *relative* one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children. Men cannot do so when they adopt. Now here we have an account of the original of this new birth.

1. Negatively.

(1.) It is not *propagated* by natural generation from our parents. It is *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of corruptible seed*, ⁴⁹²1 Peter 1:23. Man is called *flesh and blood*, because thence he has his original: but we do not become the children of God as we become the children of our natural parents. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, as corruption does. Man polluted *begat a son in his own likeness*

(~~GEN~~ Genesis 5:3); but man sanctified and renewed does not beget a son in *that* likeness. The Jews gloried much in their parentage, and the noble blood that ran in their veins: *We are Abraham's seed*; and therefore to them *pertained the adoption* because they were born of that blood; but this New-Testament adoption is not founded in any such natural relation.

(2.) It is not *produced* by the natural power of our own will. As it is not of *blood*, nor of *the will of the flesh*, so neither is it of the *will of man*, which labours under a moral impotency of determining itself to that which is good; so that the principles of the divine life are not of our own planting, it is the grace of God that makes us willing to be *his*. Nor can human laws or writings prevail to sanctify and regenerate a soul; if they could, the new birth would be by the will of man. But,

2. Positively: it is of *God*. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means (~~1PE~~ 1 Peter 1:23), and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole author. True believers are *born of God*, (~~1JO~~ 1 John 3:9; 5:1). And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the *love of God* if we have not something of his *likeness*, nor claim the privileges of adoption if we be not under the power of regeneration.

4. The *word was made flesh*, v. 14. This expresses Christ's incarnation more clearly than what went before. By his divine presence he always *was in the world*, and by his prophets he *came to his own*. But now that the fulness of time was come he was sent forth after another manner, *made of a woman* (~~GAL~~ Galatians 4:4); God manifested in the flesh, according to the faith and hope of holy Job; *Yet shall I see God in my flesh*, (~~JOB~~ Job 19:26). Observe here,

(1.) The *human nature of Christ* with which he was veiled; and that expressed two ways.

[1.] *The word was made flesh. Forasmuch as the children*, who were to become the sons of God, *were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same*, (~~HEB~~ Hebrews 2:14). The Socinians agree that Christ is both God and man, but they say that he *was man*, and was *made a God*, as Moses (~~EXO~~ Exodus 7:1), directly contrary to John here, who saith, *Theos en* — *He was God*, but *sarxegeneto* — *He was made flesh*. Compare v. 1 with this. This intimates not only that he was really and truly man, but that he subjected himself to the miseries and

calamities of the human nature. He was made *flesh*, the meanest part of man. Flesh bespeaks man *weak*, and he was crucified through *weakness*, ^{<4734>}2 Corinthians 13:4. *Flesh* bespeaks man *mortal* and *dying* (^{<4739>}Psalm 78:39), and Christ was *put to death in the flesh* ^{<4835>}1 Peter 3:18. Nay, *flesh* bespeaks *man tainted with sin* (^{<4836>}Genesis 6:3), and Christ, though he was perfectly holy and harmless, yet appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh* (^{<4838>}Romans 8:3), and was made *sin for us*, ^{<4852>}2 Corinthians 5:21. When Adam had sinned, God said to him, *Dust thou art*; not only because made out of the dust, but because by sin he was sunk into dust. His fall did, *somatoun ten psychen*, *turn him* as it were *all into body*, made him earthly; therefore he that was made a curse for us was made *flesh*, and *condemned sin in the flesh*, ^{<4838>}Romans 8:3. Wonder at this, that the eternal Word should be made flesh, when flesh was come into such an ill name; that he who made *all things* should himself be made flesh, one of the meanest things, and submit to that from which he was at the greatest distance. The voice that ushered in the gospel cried, *All flesh is grass* (^{<2406>}Isaiah 40:6), to make the Redeemer's love the more wonderful, who, to *redeem* and *save* us, was made flesh, and withered as grass; but the *Word of the Lord*, who was made flesh, *endures for ever*; when made flesh, he ceased not to be the Word of God.

[2.] He *dwelt among us*, here in this lower world. Having taken upon him the nature of man, he put himself into the place and condition of other men. The Word might have been made flesh, and dwelt among the angels; but, having taken a *body* of the same mould with ours, in it he came, and resided in the same world with us. He *dwelt among us*, us worms of the earth, us that he had no need of, us that he got nothing by, us that were *corrupt* and *depraved*, and revolted from God. The Lord God came and dwelt even *among the rebellious*, ^{<4835>}Psalm 68:18. He that had dwelt among angels, those noble and excellent beings, came and dwelt *among us* that are a *generation of vipers*, us *sinner*s, which was worse to him than David's swelling in Mesech and Kedar, or Ezekiel's dwelling *among scorpions*, or the church of Pergamus dwelling *where Satan's seat is*. When we look upon the upper world, the world of spirits, how mean and contemptible does this flesh, this body, appear, which we carry about with us, and this world in which our lot is cast, and how hard is it to a contemplative mind to be reconciled to them! But that the eternal Word was *made flesh*, was clothed with a body as we are, and dwelt in this world as we do, this has put an honour upon them both, and should make

us willing to abide in the flesh while God has any work for us to do; for Christ dwelt in this lower world, bad as it is, till he had finished what he had to do here, ^{<4970>}John 17:4. He dwelt *among* the Jews, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *He shall dwell in the tents of Shem*, ^{<0027>}Genesis 9:27. And see ^{<3820>}Zechariah 2:10. Though the Jews were unkind to him, yet he continued to dwell among them; though (as some of the ancient writers tell us) he was invited to better treatment by Abgarus king of Edessa, yet he removed not to any other nation. He *dwelt* among us. He was in the world, not as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night, but he *dwelt* among us, made a long residence, the original word is observable, *eskenosen en hemin* — *he dwelt among us*, he dwelt *as in a tabernacle*, which intimates, *First*, That he dwelt here in very *mean* circumstances, as shepherds that dwell in tents. He did not dwell among us *as in a palace*, but as in a *tent*; for he had not where to lay his head, and was always upon the remove. *Secondly*, That his state here was a *military* state. Soldiers *dwell in tents*; he had long since proclaimed war with the *seed of the serpent*, and now he takes *the field* in person, sets up his standard, and pitches his tent, to prosecute this war. *Thirdly*, That his stay among us was not to be perpetual. He dwelt here as *in a tent*, not as at *home*. The patriarchs, by dwelling in tabernacles, *confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth*, and sought the better country, and so did Christ, leaving us an example, ^{<3833>}Hebrews 13:13, 14. *Fourthly*, That as of old God dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses, by the shechinah between the cherubim, so now he dwells in the human nature of Christ; that is now the true shechinah, the symbol of God's peculiar presence. And we are to make all our addresses to God through Christ, and from him to receive divine oracles.

(2.) *The beams of his divine glory that darted through this veil of flesh: We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* The sun is still the fountain of light, though eclipsed or clouded; so Christ was still the brightness of his Father's glory, even when he *dwelt among us* in this lower world. And how slightly soever the Jews thought of him there were those that saw through the veil. Observe,

[1.] Who were the witnesses of this glory: *we*, his disciples and followers, that conversed most freely and familiarly with him; we among whom he *dwelt*. Other men discover their weaknesses to those that are most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those that were most intimate with him saw most of his glory. As it was with his *doctrine*, the disciples

knew the mysteries of it, while others had it *under the veil of parables*; so it was with his *person*, they saw the glory of his divinity, while others saw only the veil of his human nature. He manifested himself *to them, and not unto the world*. These witnesses were a competent number, twelve of them, a whole jury of witnesses; men of plainness and integrity, and far from any thing of design or intrigue.

[2.] What evidence they had of it: *We saw it*. They had not their evidence by report, at second hand, but were themselves eye-witnesses of those proofs on which they built their testimony that he was the *Son of the living God: We saw it*. The word signifies a fixed abiding sight, such as gave them an opportunity of making their observations. This apostle himself explains this: *What we declare unto you of the Word of life is what we have seen with our eyes, and what we have looked upon,* ⁶⁰⁰1 John 1:1.

[3.] What the glory was: *The glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. The glory of the *Word made flesh* was such a glory as became the only *begotten Son of God*, and could not be the glory of any other. Note, *First*, Jesus Christ is the only begotten of the Father. Believers are the children of God by the special favour of adoption and the special grace of regeneration. They are in a sense *homoiousioi* — *of a like nature* (⁶⁰⁰2 Peter 1:4), and have the image of his perfections; but Christ is *homousios* — *of the same nature*, and is the express image of his person, and the Son of God by an eternal generation. Angels are sons of God, but he never said to any of them, *This day have I begotten thee,* ⁶⁰⁰Hebrews 1:5. *Secondly*, He was evidently declared to be the only begotten of the Father, by that which was seen of his glory when he dwelt among us. Though he was in the *form of a servant*, in respect of outward circumstances, yet, in respect of graces, his form was as that of the *fourth* in the fiery furnace, *like the Son of God*. His divine glory appeared in the holiness and heavenliness of his doctrine; in his miracles, which extorted from many this acknowledgment, that he was the *Son of God*; it appeared in the purity, goodness, and beneficence, of his whole conversation. God's goodness is his glory, and he went about doing good; he spoke and acted in every thing as an incarnate Deity. Perhaps the evangelist had a particular regard to the glory of his *transfiguration*, of which he was an eye-witness; see ⁶⁰⁰2 Peter 1:16-18. God's calling him his *beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased*, intimated that he was the *only begotten of the Father*; but the full proof of this was at his resurrection.

[4.] What advantage those he dwelt among had from this. He dwelt among them, *full of grace and truth*. In the old tabernacle wherein God dwelt was the *law*, in *this* was grace; in that were *types*, in *this* was *truth*. The incarnate Word was every way qualified for his undertaking as Mediator; for he was *full of grace and truth*, the two great things that fallen man stands in need of; and this proved him to be the *Son of God* as much as the divine power and majesty that appeared in him. *First*, He has a fulness of grace and truth *for himself*; he had the Spirit without measure. He was full *of grace*, fully acceptable to his Father, and therefore qualified to intercede for us; and full *of truth*, fully apprized of the things he was to reveal, and therefore fit to instruct us. He had a fulness of knowledge and a fulness of compassion. *Secondly*, He has a fulness of grace and truth *for us*. He *received*, that he might *give*, and God was well pleased in him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and this was the *truth* of the legal *types*.

JOHN 1:15-18

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

In these verses,

I. The evangelist begins again to give us John Baptist's testimony concerning Christ, v. 15. He had said (v. 8) that he *came for a witness*; now here he tells us that he did accordingly *bear witness*. Here, Observe,

1. *How he expressed* his testimony: He *cried*, according to the prediction that he should be *the voice of one crying*. The Old-Testament prophets cried aloud, to show people their *sins*; this New-Testament prophet cried aloud, to show people their *Saviour*. This intimates,

(1.) That it was an open *public* testimony, proclaimed, that all manner of persons might take notice of it, for all are concerned in it. False teachers *entice secretly*, but wisdom publishes her dictates in the chief places of concourse.

(2.) That he was free and hearty in bearing this testimony. He *cried* as one that was both *well assured* of the truth to which he witnessed and *well affected* to it. He that had leaped in his *mother's womb* for joy of Christ's

approach, when newly conceived, does now with a like exultation of spirit *welcome* his public appearance.

2. What his *testimony* was. He appeals to what he had said at the beginning of his ministry, when he had directed them to expect one that should *come after him*, whose forerunner he was, and never intended any other than to lead them to him, and to prepare his way. This he had given them notice of from the first. Note, It is very comfortable to a minister to have the testimony of his conscience for him that he set out in his ministry with honest principles and sincere intentions, with a single eye to the glory and honour of Christ. Now what he had then said he applies to this Jesus whom he had lately baptized, and who was so remarkably owned from heaven: *This was he of whom I spoke*. John did not tell them that there would shortly appear such a one among them, and then leave them to find him out; but in *this* he went beyond all the Old-Testament prophets that he particularly specified the person: “*This was he*, the very man I told you of, and to him all I said is to be accommodated.” Now what was it he said?

(1.) He had given the preference to this Jesus: *He that comes after me*, in the time of his birth and public appearance, is preferred before me; he that *succeeds* me in preaching and making disciples is a more excellent person, upon all accounts; as the prince or peer that *comes after* is preferred before the harbinger or gentleman-usher that makes way for him. Note, Jesus Christ, who was to be called the *Son of the Highest* (⁴¹³Luke 1:32), was preferred before John Baptist, who was to be called only the *prophet of the Highest*, (⁴¹⁶Luke 1:76. John was a minister of the New Testament, but Christ was the Mediator of the New Testament. And observe, though John was a great man, and had a great name and interest, yet he was forward to give the preference to him to whom it belonged. Note, All the ministers of Christ must prefer him and his interest before themselves and their own interests; they will make an ill account *that seek their own things, not the things of Christ*, (⁵⁶²Philippians 2:21. He comes *after me*, and yet is *preferred before me*. Note, God dispenses his gifts according to his good pleasure, and many times crosses hands, as Jacob did, preferring the *younger* before the *elder*. Paul far outstripped those that were in Christ before him.

(2.) He here gives a good reason for it: *For he was before me, protos mou en* — *He was my first*, or *first to me*; he was my first Cause, my original.

The *First* is one of *God's names*, ^{<2406>}Isaiah 44:6. He is *before me*, is my *first*,

[1.] In respect of *seniority*: he was *before me*, for he was before Abraham, ^{<488>}John 8:58. Nay, he was *before all things*, ^{<5017>}Colossians 1:17. I am but of yesterday, he from eternity. It was but in *those days* that John Baptist came (^{<4011>}Matthew 3:1), but the goings forth of our Lord Jesus *were of old, from everlasting*, ^{<382>}Micah 5:2. This proves two natures in Christ. Christ, as man, *came after* John as to his public appearance; Christ, as God, was *before him*; and how could he otherwise be before him but by an eternal existence?

[2.] In respect of supremacy; for he was *my prince*; so some princes are called the *first*; *proton*, “It is he for whose sake and service I am sent: he is my Master, I am his minister and messenger.”

II. He presently returns again to speak of Jesus Christ, and cannot go on with John Baptist's testimony till v. 19. The 16th verse has a manifest connection with v. 14, where the incarnate Word was said to be *full of grace and truth*. Now here he makes this the matter, not only of our adoration, but of our thankfulness, because *from that fulness* of his *we all have received*. *He received gifts for men* (^{<388>}Psalm 68:18), that he might *give gifts to men*, ^{<408>}Ephesians 4:8. He was filled, that he might *fill all in all* (^{<4023>}Ephesians 1:23), might *fill our treasures*, ^{<402>}Proverbs 8:21. He has a fountain of fulness overflowing: *We all have received*. *All we* apostles; so some. We have received the favour of this apostleship, that is *grace*; and a fitness for it, that is *truth*. Or, rather, *All we* believers; as many as received him (v. 16), received from him. Note, All true believers receive from Christ's fulness; the best and greatest saints cannot live without him, the meanest and weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting, that we have nothing but *we have received it*; and silences perplexing fears, that we want nothing but *we may receive it*. Let us see what it is that we have received.

1. We have received *grace for grace*. Our receivings by Christ are all summed up in this one word, *grace*; we have received *kai charin* — *even grace*, so great a gift, so rich, so invaluable; we have received *no less* than grace; this is a gift to be spoken of with an emphasis. It is repeated, *grace for grace*; for to every stone in this building, as well as *to the top-stone*, we must cry, *Grace, grace*. Observe,

(1.) The blessing received. It is *grace*; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us. God's good will works the good work, and then the good work qualifies us for further tokens of his good will. As the cistern receives water from the fulness of the fountain, the branches sap from the fulness of the root, and the air light from the fulness of the sun, so we receive grace from the fulness of Christ.

(2.) The manner of its reception: *Grace for grace* — *charin anti charitos*. The phrase is singular, and interpreters put different senses upon it, each of which will be of use to illustrate the unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ. *Grace for grace* bespeaks,

[1.] The *freeness* of this grace. It is grace for grace' sake; so *Grotius*. We receive grace, not for *our sakes* (be it known to us), but even so, Father, *because it seemed good in thy sight*. It is a *gift according to grace*,
◀5126 Romans 12:6. It is grace *to us* for the sake of grace to Jesus Christ. God was well pleased in him, and is therefore well pleased with us in him,
◀406 Ephesians 1:6.

[2.] The *fulness* of this grace. *Grace for grace* is abundance of grace, grace upon grace (so *Camero*), one grace heaped upon another; as *skin for skin* is skin after skin, even all that a man has, ◀802 Job 2:4. It is a blessing poured out, that there shall not be room to receive it, *plenteous redemption*: one grace a pledge of more grace. *Joseph* — *He will add*. It is such a fulness as is called *the fulness of God* which we are filled with. We are not straitened in the grace of Christ, if we be not straitened in our own bosoms.

[3.] The *serviceableness* of this grace. *Grace for grace* is grace for the promoting and advancing of grace. Grace to be *exercised* by ourselves; gracious habits for gracious acts. Grace to be *ministered* to others; gracious vouchsafements for gracious performances: grace is a talent to be traded with. The apostles received grace (◀805 Romans 1:5; ◀408 Ephesians 3:8), that they might communicate it, ◀404 1 Peter 4:10.

[4.] The *substitution* of New-Testament grace *in the room and stead* of Old-Testament grace: so *Beza*. And this sense is confirmed by what follows (v. 17); for the Old Testament had grace in type, the New Testament has grace in truth. There was a grace under the Old Testament, the gospel was preached then (◀808 Galatians 3:8); but that grace is superseded, and we have gospel grace instead of it, a *glory which*

excelleth, ^{<4180>}2 Corinthians 3:10. Discoveries of grace are now more clear, distributions of grace far more plentiful; this is grace instead of grace.

[5.] It bespeaks the *augmentation* and *continuance of grace*. *Grace for grace* is one grace to improve, confirm, and perfect another grace. We are changed into the divine image, *from glory to glory*, from one degree of glorious grace to another, ^{<4185>}2 Corinthians 3:18. Those that have *true* grace have that for *more grace*, ^{<5006>}James 4:6. When God gives grace he saith, Take this *in part*; for he who hath promised will perform.

[6.] It bespeaks the *agreeableness* and *conformity* of grace in the saints to the grace that is in Jesus Christ; so Mr. *Clark*. *Grace for grace* is grace in us answering to grace in him, as the impression upon the wax answers the seal line for line. The grace we receive from Christ *changes us into the same image* (^{<4185>}2 Corinthians 3:18), the *image of the Son* (^{<4829>}Romans 8:29), the *image of the heavenly*, ^{<4654>}1 Corinthians 15:49.

2. We have received *grace and truth*, v. 17. He had said (v. 14) that Christ was *full of grace and truth*; now here he says that by him *grace and truth* came to us. From Christ we *receive grace*; this is a string he delights to harp upon, he cannot go off from it. Two things he further observes in this verse concerning this grace: —

(1.) Its *preference* above the law of Moses: *The law was given by Moses*, and it was a glorious discovery, both of God's *will concerning man* and his *good will to man*; but the gospel of Christ is a much clearer discovery both of duty and happiness. That which was given by Moses was purely terrifying and threatening, and bound with penalties, a law which could not *give life*, which was given with abundance of terror (^{<5128>}Hebrews 12:18); but that which is given by Jesus Christ is of another nature; it has all the beneficial uses of the law, but not the terror, for it is *grace*: *grace teaching* (^{<5111>}Titus 2:11), *grace reigning*, ^{<4612>}Romans 5:21. It is a law, but a remedial law. The endearments of love are the genius of the gospel, not the affrightments of law and the curse.

(2.) Its *connection* with truth: *grace and truth*. In the gospel we have the discovery of the greatest *truths* to be embraced by the understanding, as well as of the richest *grace* to be embraced by the will and affections. It is a *faithful saying*, and *worthy of all acceptance*; that is, it is *grace and truth*. The offers of *grace* are *sincere*, and what we may venture our souls

upon; they are made *in earnest*, for it is *grace and truth*. It is *grace and truth* with reference to the *law* that was *given by Moses*. For it is,

[1.] The performance of all the Old-Testament promises. In the Old Testament we often find *mercy* and *truth* put together, that is, mercy according to promise; so here *grace and truth* denote grace according to promise. See ~~<4172>~~Luke 1:72; ~~<1086>~~1 Kings 8:56.

[2.] It is the substance of all the Old-Testament types and shadows. Something of grace there was both in the ordinances that were instituted for Israel and the providences that occurred concerning Israel; but they were only shadows of good things to come, even of the grace that is to be *brought to us by the revelation of Jesus Christ*. He is the *true paschal lamb*, the *true scape-goat*, the *true manna*. They had grace in the picture; we have grace in the person, that is, *grace and truth*. *Grace and truth came, egeneto* — *was made*; the same word that was used (v. 3) concerning Christ's *making all things*. The law was only *made known* by Moses, but the *being* of this grace and truth, as well as the discovery of them, is owing to Jesus Christ; this was *made* by him, as the world at first was; and by him this *grace and truth* do *consist*.

3. Another thing we receive from Christ is a clear revelation of God to us (v. 18): He hath *declared* God to us, whom *no man hath seen at any time*. This was the grace and truth which came by Christ, the knowledge of God and an acquaintance with him. Observe,

(1.) The insufficiency of all other discoveries: *No man hath seen God at any time*. This intimates,

[1.] That the nature of God being *spiritual*, he is invisible to bodily eyes, he is a being *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*, ~~<5066>~~1 Timothy 6:16. We have therefore need to *live by faith*, by which we *see him that is invisible*, ~~<8127>~~Hebrews 11:27.

[2.] That the revelation which God made of himself in the Old Testament was very short and imperfect, in comparison with that which he has made by Christ: *No man hath seen God at any time*; that is, what was seen and known of God before the incarnation of Christ was nothing to that which is now seen and known; life and immortality are now brought to a much clearer light than they were then.

[3.] That none of the Old-Testament prophets were so well qualified to make known the mind and will of God to the children of men as our Lord Jesus was, for none of them had *seen God at any time*. *Moses beheld the similitude of the Lord* (^{<0428>}Numbers 12:8), but was told that he could not *see his face*, ^{<0230>}Exodus 33:20. But *this* recommends Christ's holy religion to us that it was founded by one that had seen God, and knew more of his mind than any one else ever did.

(2.) The all-sufficiency of the gospel discovery proved from its author: *The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him*. Observe here,

[1.] How *fit* he was to make this discovery, and every way qualified for it. He and he alone was *worthy to take the book, and to open the seals*, ^{<0418>}Revelation 5:9. For, *First*, He is *the only-begotten Son*; and who so likely to know the Father as the Son? or in whom is the Father better known than in the Son? ^{<0412>}Matthew 11:27. He is of the same nature with the Father, so that he who hath *seen him* hath seen *the Father*, ^{<0419>}John 14:9. The servant is not supposed to know so well *what his Lord does* as the Son, ^{<0415>}John 15:15. Moses was *faithful as a servant*, but Christ *as a Son*. *Secondly*, He is *in the bosom of the Father*. He had lain in his bosom from eternity. When he was here upon earth, yet still, as God, he was in the bosom of the Father, and thither he returned when he *ascended*. *In the bosom of the Father*; that is,

1. In the bosom of his *special love*, dear to him, in *whom he was well pleased*, always his delight. All God's saints are *in his hand*, but his Son was *in his bosom*, one in nature and essence, and therefore in the highest degree one *in love*.

2. In the bosom of his *secret counsels*. As there was a mutual *complacency*, so there was a mutual *consciousness*, between the Father and Son (^{<0412>}Matthew 11:27); none so fit as he to make known God, for none knew his mind as he did. Our most secret counsels we are said to hide *in our bosom (in pectore)*; Christ was privy to the *bosom-counsels* of the Father. The prophets *sat down at his feet* as scholars; Christ lay in his bosom as a friend. See ^{<0411>}Ephesians 3:11.

[2.] How *free* he was in making this discovery: *He hath declared. Him* is not in the original. He has declared that of God which no man had at any time seen or known; not only that which was hid *of God*, but that which

was hid *in* God (^{<40B>}Ephesians 3:9), *exegesato* — it signifies a plain, clear, and full discovery, not by general and doubtful hints, but by particular explications. He that runs may now read the will of God and the way of salvation. This is the *grace*, this the *truth*, that came by Jesus Christ.

<41B>JOHN 1:19-28

JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO CHRIST

We have here the testimony of John, which he delivered to the messengers who were sent from Jerusalem to examine him. Observe here,

I. Who they were that sent to him, and who they were that were sent.

1. They that sent to him were *the Jews at Jerusalem*, the great sanhedrim or high-commission court, which sat at Jerusalem, and was the representative of the Jewish church, who took cognizance of all matters relating to religion. One would think that they who were the fountains of learning, and the guides of the church, should have, by books, understood the times so well as to know that the Messiah was at hand, and therefore should presently have known him that was his forerunner, and readily embraced him; but, instead of this, they sent messengers to *cross questions* with him. Secular learning, honour, and power, seldom dispose men's minds to the reception of divine light.

2. They that were sent were,

(1.) *Priests and Levites*, probably members of the council, men of learning, gravity, and authority. John Baptist was himself a priest of the seed of Aaron, and therefore it was not fit that he should be examined by any but priests. It was prophesied concerning John's ministry that it should *purify the Sons of Levi* (^{<40B>}Malachi 3:3), and therefore they were jealous of him and his reformation.

(2.) They were *of the Pharisees*, proud, self-justiciaries, that thought they needed no repentance, and therefore could not bear one that made it his business to preach repentance.

II. On what errand they were sent; it was to enquire concerning John and *his baptism*. They did not send for John to them, probably because they

feared the people, lest the people where John was should be provoked to rise, or lest the people where they were should be brought acquainted with him; they thought it was good to keep him at a distance. They enquire concerning him,

1. To satisfy their curiosity; as the Athenians enquired concerning Paul's doctrine, for the novelty of it, ~~417b~~ Acts 17:19, 20. Such a proud conceit they had of themselves that the doctrine of repentance was to them strange doctrine.

2. It was to show their authority. They thought they *looked great* when they called him to account whom all men counted as a prophet, and arraigned him at their bar.

3. It was with a design to *suppress* him and silence him if they could find any colour for it; for they were jealous of his growing interest, and his ministry agreed neither with the Mosaic dispensation which they had been long under, nor with the notions they had formed of the Messiah's kingdom.

III. What was the answer he gave them, and his account, both concerning himself and concerning his baptism, in both which he witnessed to Christ.

1. Concerning himself, and what he professed himself to be. They asked him, *Sy tis ei* — *Thou, who art thou?* John's appearing in the world was surprising. He was in the wilderness till the day of his showing unto Israel. His spirit, his converse, his doctrine, had something in them which commanded and gained respect; but he did not, as seducers do, give out himself to be *some great one*. He was more industrious to *do good* than to *appear great*; and therefore waived saying any thing of himself till he was legally interrogated. Those speak best for Christ that say least of themselves, whose *own works* praise them, not *their own lips*. He answers their interrogatory,

(1.) Negatively. He was not that great one whom some took him to be. God's faithful witnesses stand more upon their guard *against undue respect* than against *unjust contempt*. Paul writes as warmly against those that overvalued him, and said, *I am of Paul*, as against those that undervalued him, and said that his bodily presence was weak; and he rent his clothes when he was called a god.

[1.] John disowns himself to be *the Christ* (v. 20): *He said, I am not the Christ*, who was now expected and waited for. Note, The ministers of Christ must remember that *they are not Christ*, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. They are not Christ, and therefore must not lord it over God's heritage, nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of Christians. They cannot create grace and peace; they cannot enlighten, convert, quicken, comfort; for they are not Christ. Observe how emphatically this is here expressed concerning John: *He confessed, and denied not, but confessed*; it denotes his vehemence and constancy in making this protestation. Note, Temptations to pride, and assuming that honour to ourselves which does not belong to us, ought to be resisted with a great deal of vigour and earnestness. When John was taken to be the Messiah, he did not connive at it with a *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur* — *If the people will be deceived, let them*; but openly and solemnly, without any ambiguities, confessed, *I am not the Christ; hoti ouk eimi ego ho Christos* — *I am not the Christ, not I*; another is at hand, who is he, but I am not. His disowning himself to be the Christ is called his *confessing* and not *denying* Christ. Note, Those that humble and abase themselves thereby confess Christ, and give honour to him; but those that will not deny themselves do in effect deny Christ,

[2.] He disowns himself to be Elias, v. 21. The Jews expected the person of Elias to return from heaven, and to live among them, and promised themselves great things from it. Hearing of John's character, doctrine, and baptism, and observing that he appeared as one dropped from heaven, in the same part of the country from which Elijah was carried to heaven, it is no wonder that they were ready to take him for this Elijah; but he disowned this honour too. He was indeed prophesied of under the name of Elijah (³⁰⁴⁵Malachi 4:5), and he came in the *spirit and power of Elias* (⁴⁰¹⁷Luke 1:17), and was the Elias that was to come (⁴¹¹⁴Matthew 11:14); but he was not the person of Elias, not that Elias that went to heaven in the fiery chariot, as he was that met Christ in his transfiguration. He was the Elias that God had promised, not the Elias that they foolishly dreamed of. Elias did come, and *they knew him not* (⁴¹⁷²Matthew 17:12); nor did he make himself known to them as the Elias, because they had promised themselves such an Elias as God never promised them.

[3.] He disowns himself to be that *prophet*, or the prophet. *First*, He was not *that prophet* which Moses said *the Lord would raise up to them of*

their brethren, like unto him. If they meant this, they needed not ask that question, for that prophet was no other than the Messiah, and he had said already, *I am not the Christ*. *Secondly*, He was not such a prophet as they expected and wished for, who, like Samuel and Elijah, and some other of the prophets, would interpose in public affairs, and rescue them from under the Roman yoke. *Thirdly*, He was not one of the old prophets raised from the dead, as they expected one to come before Elias, as Elias before the Messiah. *Fourthly*, Though John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, yet he had his revelation, not by dreams and visions, as the Old-Testament prophets had theirs; his commission and work were of another nature, and belonged to another dispensation. If John had said that he was Elias, and was a prophet, he might have made his words good; but ministers must, upon all occasions, express themselves with the utmost caution, both that they may not confirm people in any mistakes, and particularly that they may not give occasion to any to think of them *above what is meet*.

(2.) Affirmatively. The committee that was sent to examine him pressed for a positive answer (v. 22), urging the authority of *those that sent them*, which they expected he should pay a deference to: “*Tell us, What art thou?* not that we may believe thee, and be baptized by three, but that we may *give an answer* to those that sent us, and that it may not be said we were sent on a fool's errand.” John was looked upon as a man of sincerity, and therefore they believed he would not give an evasive ambiguous answer; but would be fair and above-board, and give a plain answer to a plain question: *What sayest thou of thyself?* And he did so, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness*. Observe,

[1.] He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to show that the scripture was fulfilled in him, and that his office was supported by a divine authority. What the scripture saith of the office of the ministry should be often thought of by those of that high calling, who must look upon themselves as that, and that only, which the word of God makes them.

[2.] He gives in his answer in very humble, modest, self-denying expressions. He chooses to apply that scripture to himself which denotes not his dignity, but his duty and dependence, which bespeaks him little: *I am the voice*, as if he were *vox et praeterea nihil — mere voice*.

[3.] He gives such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him; for he *was the voice*

(see ^{<30B>}Isaiah 40:3), a voice to alarm, an articulate voice to instruct. Ministers are but the *voice*, the vehicle, by which God is pleased to communicate his mind. What are Paul and Apollos but messengers? Observe, *First*, He was a *human* voice. The people were prepared to receive the law by the voice of thunders, and a trumpet exceedingly loud, such as made them tremble; but they were prepared for the gospel by the voice of a man like ourselves, *a still small voice*, such as that in which God came to Elijah, ^{<41B>}1 Kings 19:12. *Secondly*, He was the voice of *one crying*, which denotes,

1. His *earnestness* and *importunity* in calling people to repentance; he *cried aloud, and did not spare*. Ministers must preach as those that are in earnest, and are themselves affected with those things with which they desire to affect others. Those words are not likely to *thaw* the hearers' hearts that *freeze* between the speaker's lips.
2. His *open publication* of the doctrine he preached; he was the voice of *one crying*, that all manner of persons might hear and take notice. *Doth not wisdom cry?* ^{<38B>}Proverbs 8:1. *Thirdly*, It was in the *wilderness* that this voice was crying; in a place of silence and solitude, out of the noise of the world and the hurry of its business; the more retired we are from the tumult of secular affairs the better prepared we are to hear from God.

Fourthly, That which he cried was, *Make straight the way of the Lord*; that is,

1. He came to *rectify* the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God; it is certain that they are right ways, but the scribes and Pharisees, with their corrupt glosses upon the law, had made them crooked. Now John Baptist calls people to return to the original rule.
2. He came to prepare and dispose people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. It is an allusion to the harbingers of a prince or great man, that cry, *Make room*. Note, When God is coming towards us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the word of the Lord have *free course*. See ^{<32B>}Psalm 24:7.

2. Here is his testimony concerning *his baptism*.

(1.) The enquiry which the committee made about it: *Why baptizest thou, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet?* v. 25.

[1.] They readily apprehended baptism to be fitly and properly used as a sacred rite or ceremony, for the Jewish church had used it with circumcision in the admission of proselytes, to signify the cleansing of them from the pollutions of their former state. That sign was made use of in the Christian church, that it might be the more passable. Christ did not affect novelty, nor should his ministers.

[2.] They expected it would be used in the days of the Messiah, because it was promised that then there should be a *fountain opened* (~~3811~~ Zechariah 13:1), and *clean water sprinkled*, ~~3825~~ Ezekiel 36:25. It is taken for granted that Christ, and Elias, and *that prophet*, would baptize, when they came to *purify a polluted world*. Divine justice drowned the old world *in its filth*, but divine grace has provided for the cleansing of this new world *from its filth*.

[3.] They would therefore know by what authority John baptized. His denying himself to be Elias, or *that prophet*, subjected him to this further question, *Why baptizest thou?* Note, It is no new thing for a man's modesty to be turned against him, and improved to his prejudice; but it is better that men should take advantage of our low thoughts of ourselves, to *trample upon us*, than the devil take advantage of our high thoughts of ourselves, to *tempt us* to pride and draw us into his condemnation.

(2.) The account he gave of it, v. 26, 27.

[1.] He owned himself to be only the minister of the outward sign: "*I baptize with water*, and that is all; I am no more, and do no more, than what you see; I have no other title than *John the Baptist*; I cannot confer the spiritual grace signified by it." Paul was in care that none should think of him above what they saw him to be (~~4116~~ 2 Corinthians 12:6); so was John Baptist. Ministers must not set up for masters.

[2.] He directed them to one who was greater than himself, and would do that for them, if they pleased, which he could not do: "*I baptize with water*, and that is the utmost of my commission; I have nothing to do but by this to lead you to one that comes after me, and consign you to him." Note, The great business of Christ's ministers is to direct all people to him; we preach not ourselves, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*. John gave the same account to this committee that he had given to the people (v. 15): *This as he of whom I spoke*. John was constant and uniform in his testimony, not as a reed shaken with the wind. The sanhedrim were jealous of his interest

in the people, but he is not afraid to tell them that there is one at the door that will go beyond him. *First*, He tells them of Christ's *presence among them* now at this time: *There stands one among you, at this time, whom you know not*. Christ stood among the common people, and was as one of them. Note,

1. Much true worth lies hid in this world; obscurity is often the lot of real excellency. Saints are God's *hidden ones*, therefore *the world knows them not*.

2. God himself is often nearer to us than we are aware of. *The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not*. They were gazing, in expectation of the messiah: *Lo he is here, or he is there, when the kingdom of God was abroad and already among them*, ^{<172>}Luke 17:21. *Secondly*, He tells them of Christ's *preference above himself*: He comes *after me*, and yet is *preferred before me*. This he had said before; he adds here, “Whose *shoe-latchet I am not worthy to loose*; I am not fit to be named the same day with him; it is an honour too great for me to pretend to be in the meanest office about him,” ^{<1254>}1 Samuel 25:41. Those to whom Christ is precious reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them. See ^{<1800>}Psalms 84:10. If so great a man as John accounted himself unworthy of the honour of being near Christ, how unworthy then should we account ourselves! Now, one would think, these chief priests and Pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, should presently have asked who, and where, this excellent person was; and who more likely to tell them than he who had given them this general notice? No, they did not think this any part of their business or concern; they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him: so that their ignorance was *wilful*; they might have known Christ, and would not.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the place where all this was done: *In Bethabara beyond Jordan*, v. 28. Bethabara signifies the *house of passage*; some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel state by Jesus Christ. It was at a great *distance* from Jerusalem, beyond Jordan; probably because what he did *there* would be least offensive to the government. Amos must go prophesy in the country, not near the court; but it was sad that Jerusalem should put so far from her the things that belonged to *her peace*. He made this confession in the same

place where he was *baptizing*, that all those who attended his baptism might be witnesses of it, and none might say that they knew not what to *make of him*.

JOHN 1:29-36

JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO CHRIST

We have in these verses an account of John's testimony concerning Jesus Christ, which he witnessed to his own disciples that followed him. As soon as ever Christ was *baptized* he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, to be *tempted*; and there he was forty days. During his absence John had continued to bear testimony to him, and to tell the people of him; but now at last he *sees Jesus coming to him*, returning from the wilderness of temptation. As soon as that conflict was over Christ immediately returned to John, who was *preaching* and *baptizing*. Now Christ was tempted for example and encouragement to us; and this teaches us,

1. That the *hardships* of a tempted state should engage us to keep close to ordinances; to go into the *sanctuary of God*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 73:17. Our combats with Satan should oblige us to keep close to the communion of saints: two are better than one.

2. That the *honours* of a victorious state must not set us *above ordinances*. Christ had triumphed over Satan, and been attended by angels, and yet, after all, he returns to the place where John was preaching and baptizing. As long as we are on this side heaven, whatever extraordinary visits of divine grace we may have here at any time, we must still keep close to the ordinary means of grace and comfort, and walk with God in them. Now here are *two testimonies* borne by John to Christ, but those two *agree in one*.

I. Here is his testimony to Christ on the first day that he saw him coming from the wilderness; and here four things are witnessed by him concerning Christ, when he had him before his eyes: —

1. That he is *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*, v. 29. Let us learn here,

(1.) That Jesus Christ is the *Lamb of God*, which bespeaks him the great sacrifice, by which atonement is made for sin, and man reconciled to God. Of all the legal sacrifices he chooses to allude to the *lambs* that were offered, not only because a lamb is an emblem of meekness, and Christ must be led as a *lamb to the slaughter* (^{<257>}Isaiah 53:7), but with a special reference,

[1.] To the *daily sacrifice*, which was offered every morning and evening continually, and that was always a *lamb* (^{<123>}Exodus 29:38), which was a type of Christ, as the everlasting propitiation, whose blood continually speaks.

[2.] To the *paschal lamb*, the blood of which, being sprinkled upon the door-posts, secured the Israelites from the stroke of the destroying angel. Christ is *our passover*, ^{<471>}1 Corinthians 5:7. He is the *Lamb of God*; he is appointed by *him* (^{<425>}Romans 3:25), he was devoted to *him* (^{<479>}John 17:19), and he was accepted with *him*; in *him* he was well pleased. The lot which fell on the goat that was to be offered for a sin-offering was called the *Lord's lot* (^{<168>}Leviticus 16:8, 9); so Christ, who was to make atonement for sin, is called the *Lamb of God*.

(2.) That Jesus Christ, as the *Lamb of God*, *takes away the sin of the world*. This was his undertaking; he appeared, to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, ^{<395>}Hebrews 9:26. John Baptist had called people to repent of their sins, in order to the remission of them. Now here he shows how and by whom that remission was to be expected, what ground of hope we have that our sins shall be pardoned upon our repentance, though our repentance makes no satisfaction for them. This ground of hope we have — Jesus Christ is *the Lamb of God*.

[1.] He *takes away sin*. He, being Mediator between God and man, takes away that which is, above any thing, offensive to the *holiness* of God, and destructive to the *happiness* of man. He came, *First*, To take away the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, to vacate the judgment, and reverse the attainder, which mankind lay under, by an act of indemnity, of which all penitent obedient believers may claim the benefit. *Secondly*, To take away the power of sin by the Spirit of his grace, so that it shall not have dominion, ^{<114>}Romans 6:14. Christ, as the Lamb of God, washes us from our sins in his own blood; that is, he both *justifies* and *sanctifies* us: he *takes away sin*. He is *ho airon* — *he is taking away* the sin of the world, which denotes it not a single but a continued act; it is his constant work

and office to take *away sin*, which is such a *work of time* that it will never be completed till time shall be no more. He is always *taking away sin*, by the continual intercession of his blood in heaven, and the continual influence of his grace on earth.

[2.] He takes away the *sin of the world*; purchases pardon for all those that repent, and believe the gospel, of what country, nation, or language, soever they be. The legal sacrifices had reference only to the sins of Israel, to make atonement for them; but the Lamb of God was offered to be a propitiation for the *sin of the whole world*; see ^{<ref>1 John 2:2.</ref>} This is encouraging to our faith; if Christ takes away the sin of the world, then why not my sin? Christ levelled his force at the main body of sin's army, struck at the root, and aimed at the overthrow, of that *wickedness* which the *whole world lay in*. God was in him reconciling the world to himself.

[3.] He does this by *taking it upon himself*. He is the Lamb of God, that *bears the sin of the world*; so the margin reads it. He bore sin *for us*, and so bears it *from us*; he *bore the sin of many*, as the scape-goat had the sins of Israel put upon his head, ^{<ref>Leviticus 16:21.</ref>} God could have taken away the sin by taking away the sinner, as he took away the sin of the old world; but he has found out a way of abolishing the sin, and yet sparing the sinner, by making his Son *sin for us*.

(3.) That it is our duty, with an eye of faith, to *behold* the Lamb of God thus taking away the *sin of the world*. See him taking away sin, and let that increase our hatred of sin, and resolutions against it. Let not us hold that fast which the Lamb of God came to take away: for Christ will either take our sins away or take us away. Let it increase our love to Christ, *who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*, ^{<ref>Revelation 1:5.</ref>} Whatever God is pleased to take away from us, if withal he take away our sins, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain.

2. That this was he of whom he had spoken before (v. 30, 31): *This is he*, this person whom I now point at, you see where he stands, *this is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man*. Observe,

(1.) This honour John had above all the prophets, that, whereas they spoke of him as one that should come, he saw him already come. *This is he*. He sees him *now*, he sees him *nigh*, ^{<ref>Numbers 24:17.</ref>} Such a difference there is between present *faith* and future *vision*. Now we love one whom we have not seen; then we shall see him whom our souls love, shall see

him, and say, This is he of whom I said, *my Christ*, and *my all*, *my beloved*, and *my friend*.

(2.) John calls Christ *a man*; after me comes a man — *aner*, a *strong man*: like *the man*, the branch, or the *man of God's right hand*.

(3.) He refers to what he had himself said of him before: *This is he of whom I said*. Note, Those who have said the most honourable things of Christ will never see cause to unsay them; but the more they know him the more they are confirmed in their esteem of him. John still thinks as meanly of himself, and as highly of Christ, as ever. Though Christ appeared not in any external pomp or grandeur, yet John is not ashamed to own, *This is he whom I meant*, who is *preferred before me*. And it was necessary that John should thus show them the person, otherwise they could not have believed that one who made so mean a figure should be he of whom John had spoken such great things.

(4.) He protests against any confederacy or combination with this Jesus: *And I knew him not*. Though there was some relation between them (Elisabeth was cousin to the virgin Mary), yet there was no acquaintance at all between them; John had no personal knowledge of Jesus till he saw him come to his baptism. Their manner of life had been different: John had spent his time in the wilderness, in solitude; Jesus at Nazareth, in conversation. There was no correspondence, no interview between them, that the matter might appear to be wholly carried on by the direction and disposal of Heaven, and not by any design or concert of the persons themselves. And as he hereby disowns all collusion, so also all partiality and sinister regard in it; he could not be supposed to favour him as a friend, for there was no friendship or familiarity between them. Nay, as he could not be biassed to speak honourably of him because he was a stranger to him, he was not able to say any thing of him but what he *received from above*, to which he appeals, ~~412~~ John 3:27. Note, They who are taught believe and confess one whom they have not seen, and blessed are they who *yet have believed*.

(5.) The great intention of John's ministry and baptism was to introduce Jesus Christ. That he should be *made manifest to Israel*, therefore *am I come baptizing with water*. Observe,

[1.] Though John did not know Jesus by face, yet he knew that he should be made manifest. Note, We may know the certainty of that which yet we

do not fully know the nature and intention of. We know that the happiness of heaven *shall be made manifest to Israel*, but cannot describe it.

[2.] The general assurance John had that Christ *should be made manifest* served to carry him with diligence and resolution through his work, though he was kept in the dark concerning particulars: *Therefore am I come*. Our assurance of the reality of things, though they are unseen, is enough to quicken us to our duty.

[3.] God reveals himself to his people by degrees. At first, John knew no more concerning Christ but that he should be made manifest; in confidence of that, he came baptizing, and now he is favoured with a sight of him. They who, upon God's word, believe what they do not see, shall shortly see what they now believe.

[4.] The ministry of the word and sacraments is designed for no other end than to lead people to Christ, and to make him more and more manifest.

[5.] Baptism with water made way for the manifesting of Christ, as it supposed our corruption and filthiness, and signified our cleansing by him who is the *fountain opened*.

3. That this was he *upon whom the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove*. For the confirming of his testimony concerning Christ, he here vouches the extraordinary appearance at his baptism, in which God himself bore witness to him. This was a considerable proof of Christ's mission. Now, to assure us of the truth of it, we are here told (v. 32-34),

(1.) That John Baptist saw it: He *bore record*; did not relate it as a story, but solemnly attested it, with all the seriousness and solemnity of *witness-bearing*. He made affidavit of it: *I saw the Spirit descending* from heaven. John could not see the *Spirit*, but he saw the dove which was a sign and representation of the Spirit. The Spirit came now upon Christ, both to *make him fir* for his work and to *make him known* to the world. Christ was notified, not by the descent of a crown upon him, or by a transfiguration, but by the descent of the Spirit as a dove upon him, to qualify him for his undertaking. Thus the first testimony given to the apostles was by the descent of the Spirit upon them. God's children are made manifest by their *graces*; their glories are reserved for their future state. Observe,

[1.] The spirit descended *from heaven*, for every good and perfect gift is *from above*.

[2.] He descended *like a dove* — an emblem of meekness, and mildness, and gentleness, which makes him *fit to teach*. The dove brought the olive-branch of peace, ^{<0081>}Genesis 8:11.

[3.] The Spirit that descended upon Christ *abode upon him*, as was foretold, ^{<210>}Isaiah 11:2. The Spirit did not *move him at times*, as Samson (^{<0735>}Judges 13:25), but *at all times*. The Spirit was given to him *without measure*; it was his prerogative to have the Spirit always upon him, so that he could at no time be found either *unqualified* for his work himself or *unfurnished* for the supply of those that seek to him for his grace.

(2.) That he was *told to expect it*, which very much corroborates the proof. It was not John's bare conjecture, that surely he on whom he saw the Spirit descending was the Son of God; but it was an *instituted* sign given him before, by which he might certainly know it (v. 33): *I knew him not*. He insists much upon this, that he knew no more of him than other people did, otherwise than by revelation. But *he that sent me to baptize* gave me this sign, *Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, the same is he*.

[1.] See here what sure grounds John went upon in his ministry and baptism, that he might proceed with all imaginable satisfaction. *First*, He did not run *without sending*: *God sent him to baptize*. He had a warrant from heaven for what he did. When a minister's call is clear, his comfort is sure, though his success is not always so. *Secondly*, He did not run *without speeding*; for, when he was sent to *baptize with water*, he was directed to one that should *baptize with the Holy Ghost*. Under this notion John Baptist was taught to expect Christ, as one who would give that repentance and faith which he called people to, and would carry on and complete that blessed structure of which he was now laying the foundation. Note, It is a great comfort to Christ's ministers, in their administration of the outward signs, that he whose ministers they are can confer the grace signified thereby, and so put life, and soul, and power into their ministrations; can speak to the heart what they speak to the ear, and *breathe* upon the dry bones to which they *prophesy*.

[2.] See what sure grounds he went upon in his designation of the person of the Messiah. God had before given him a sign, as he did to Samuel concerning Saul: "On whom thou shalt see the Spirit descend, *that same is he*." This not only prevented any mistakes, but gave him boldness in his testimony. When he had such assurance as this given him, he could speak with assurance. When John was told this before, his expectations could

not but be very much raised; and, when the event exactly answered the prediction, his faith could not but be much confirmed: and these things are written that we may believe.

4. That he is *the Son of God*. This is the conclusion of John's testimony, that in which all the particulars centre, as the *quod erat demonstrandum* — *the fact to be demonstrated* (v. 34): *I saw, and bore record, that this is the Son of God*.

(1.) The truth asserted is, *that this is the Son of God*. The voice from heaven proclaimed, and John subscribed to it, not only that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost by a divine authority, but that he has a divine nature. This was the peculiar Christian creed, that Jesus is the Son of God (⁴¹⁶⁶Matthew 16:16), and here is the first framing of it.

(2.) John's testimony to it: "*I saw, and bore record*. Not only I now bear record of it, but I did so as soon as I had seen it." Observe,

[1.] What he *saw* he was forward to *bear record* of, as they, ⁴⁴⁰⁰Acts 4:20: *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen*.

[2.] What he *bore record* of was what he *saw*. Christ's witnesses were eye-witnesses, and therefore the more to be credited: they did not speak by hear-say and report, ⁴¹¹⁶2 Peter 1:16.

II. Here is John's testimony to Christ, the next day after, v. 35, 36. Where observe,

1. He took every opportunity that offered itself to lead people to Christ: *John stood looking upon Jesus as he walked*. It should seem, John was now retired from the multitude, and was in close conversation with *two* of his disciples. Note, Ministers should not only in their public preaching, but in their private converse, witness to Christ, and serve his interests. He saw Jesus *walking* at some distance, yet did not go to him himself, because he would shun every thing that might give the least colour to suspect a combination. He was *looking upon Jesus* — *emblemsas*; he looked stedfastly, and fixed his eyes upon him. Those that would lead others to Christ must be diligent and frequent in the *contemplation* of him themselves. John had seen Christ before, but now looked upon him, ⁴¹¹John 1:1.

2. He repeated the same testimony which he had given to Christ the day before, though he could have delivered some other great truth concerning him; but thus he would show that he was uniform and constant in his testimony, and consistent with himself. His doctrine was the same in private that it was in public, as Paul's was, ^{<441>}Acts 20:20, 21. It is good to have that repeated which we have heard, ^{<300>}Philippians 3:1. The doctrine of Christ's sacrifice for the taking away of the sin of the world ought especially to be insisted upon by all good ministers: Christ, the Lamb of God, *Christ and him crucified*.

3. He intended this especially for his two disciples that stood with him; he was willing to turn them over to Christ, for to this end he bore witness to Christ in their hearing that they might leave all to follow him, even that they might leave *him*. He did not reckon that he lost those disciples who went over from him to Christ, any more than the schoolmaster reckons that scholar lost whom he sends to the university. John gathered disciples, not for himself, but for Christ to *prepare them for the Lord*, ^{<407>}Luke 1:17. So far was he from being jealous of Christ's growing interest, that there was nothing he was more desirous of. Humble generous souls will give others their due praise without fear of diminishing themselves by it. What we have of reputation, as well as of other things, will not be the less for our giving every body his own.

^{<413>}JOHN 1:37-42

THE CALL OF ANDREW AND PETER

We have here the turning over of two disciples from John to Jesus, and one of them fetching in a third, and these are the first-fruits of Christ's disciples; see how small the church was in its beginnings, and what the dawning of the day of its great things was.

I. Andrew and another with him were the two that John Baptist had directed to Christ, v. 37. Who the other was we are not told; some think that it was Thomas, comparing ^{<420>}John 21:2; others that it was John himself, the penman of this gospel, whose manner it is industriously to conceal his name, ^{<413>}John 13:23, and ^{<408>}John 20:3.

1. Here is their readiness to go over to Christ: They *heard John speak of Christ as the Lamb of God*, and they *followed Jesus*. Probably they had heard John say the same thing the day before, and then it had not the effect upon them which now it had; see the benefit of repetition, and of private personal converse. They heard him speak of Christ as the *Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world*, and this made them *follow him*. The strongest and most prevailing argument with a sensible awakened soul to follow Christ is that it is he, and he only, that *takes away sin*.

2. The kind notice Christ took of them, v. 38. They came behind him; but, though he had his back towards them, he was soon aware of them, and *turned*, and *saw them following*. Note, Christ takes early cognizance of the first motions of a soul towards him, and the first step taken in the way to heaven; see ^{<2645>} Isaiah 64:5; ^{<250>} Luke 15:20. He did not stay till they begged leave to speak with him, but spoke first. What communion there is between a soul and Christ, it is he that *begins the discourse*. He saith unto them, *What seek ye?* This was not a reprimand for their boldness in intruding into his company: he that came to *seek us* never checked any for *seeking* him; but, on the contrary, it is a kind invitation of them into his acquaintance whom he saw bashful and modest: “Come, what have you to say to me? What is your petition? What is your request.” Note, Those whose business it is to instruct people in the affairs of their souls should be humble, and mild, and easy of access, and should encourage those that apply to them. The question Christ put to them is what we should all put to ourselves when we begin to follow Christ, and take upon us the profession of his holy religion: “*What seek ye? What do we design and desire?*” Those that *follow* Christ, and yet *seek* the world, or themselves, or the praise of men, deceive themselves. “*What seek we in seeking Christ? Do we seek a teacher, ruler, and reconciler? In following Christ, do we seek the favour of God and eternal life?*” If our *eye* be *single* in this, we are *full of light*.

3. Their modest enquiry concerning the place of his abode: *Rabbi, where dwellest thou?*

(1.) In calling him *Rabbi*, they intimated that their design in coming to him was to be *taught by him*; *rabbi* signifies a *master*, a teaching master; the Jews called their doctors, or learned men, *rabbies*. The word comes from *rab*, *multus* or *magnus*, a *rabbi*, a *great man*, and one that, as we say, has *much in him*. Never was there such a *rabbi* as our Lord Jesus, such a *great*

one, in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These came to Christ to be his scholars, so must all those that apply themselves to him. John had told them that he was the *Lamb of God*; now this *Lamb* is worthy to *take the book and open the seals* as a rabbi, ^{<183>}Revelation 5:9. And, unless we give up ourselves to be ruled and taught by him, he will not *take away our sins*.

(2.) In asking *where he dwelt*, they intimate a desire to be better acquainted with him. Christ was a stranger in this country, so that they meant where was his *inn* where he *lodged*; for there they would attend him at some seasonable time, when he should appoint, to receive instruction from him; they would not press rudely upon him, when it was not proper. Civility and good manners well become those who follow Christ. And, besides, they hoped to have more from him than they could have in a short conference now by the way. They resolved to make a business, not a by-business of conversing with Christ. Those that have had some communion with Christ cannot but desire,

[1.] A *further communion* with him; they follow on to know more of him.

[2.] A *fixed communion* with him; where they may sit down at his feet, and abide by his instructions. It is not enough to take a turn with Christ now and then, but we must *lodge with him*.

4. The courteous invitation Christ gave them to his lodgings: *He saith unto them, Come and see*. Thus should good desires towards Christ and communion with him be countenanced.

(1.) He invites them to come to his lodgings: the nearer we approach to Christ, the more we see of his beauty and excellency. Deceivers maintain their interest in their followers by keeping them at a distance, but that which Christ desired to recommend him to the esteem and affections of his followers was that they would *come and see*: “*Come and see* what a mean lodging I have, what poor accommodations I take up with, that you may not expect any worldly advantage by following me, as they did who made their court to the scribes and Pharisees, and called them rabbin. *Come and see* what you must count upon if you follow me.” See ^{<183>}Matthew 8:20.

(2.) He invites them to come *immediately* and without delay. They asked where he lodged, that they might wait upon him at a more convenient

season; but Christ invites them immediately to *come and see*; never in better time than now. Hence learn,

[1.] As to others, that it is best taking people when they are in a good mind; strike while the iron is hot.

[2.] As to ourselves, that it is wisdom to embrace the present opportunities: *Now is the accepted time*, ^{1002} 2 Corinthians 6:2.

5. Their cheerful and (no doubt) thankful acceptance of his invitation: *They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day*. It had been greater modesty and manners than had done them good if they had refused this offer.

(2.) They readily went along with him: *They came and saw where he dwelt*. Gracious souls cheerfully accept Christ's gracious invitations; as David, ^{1078} Psalm 27:8. They enquired not how they might be accommodated with him, but would put that to the venture, and make the best of what they found. It is good being where Christ is, wherever it be.

(2.) They were so well pleased with what they found that they *abode with him that day* ("Master, it is good to be here"); and he bade them welcome. It was about the tenth hour. Some think that John reckons according to the Roman computation, and that it was about ten o'clock in the morning, and they staid with him till night; others think that John reckons as the other evangelists did, according to the Jewish computation, and that it was four o'clock in the afternoon, and they abode with him that night and the next day. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that this next day that they spent with Christ was a sabbath-day, and, it being late, they could not get home before the sabbath. As it is our duty, wherever we are, to contrive to spend the sabbath as much as may be to our spiritual benefit and advantage, so they are blessed who, by the lively exercises of faith, love, and devotion, spend their sabbaths in communion with Christ. These are Lord's days indeed, *days of the Son of man*.

II. Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ. If Peter had been the first-born of Christ's disciples, the papists would have made a noise with it: he did indeed afterwards come to be more eminent in gifts, but Andrew had the honour first to be acquainted with Christ, and to be the instrument of bringing Peter to him. Observe,

1. The *information* which Andrew gave to Peter, with an intimation to come to Christ.

(1.) He *found him*: *He first finds his own brother Simon*; his finding implies his seeking him. Simon came along with Andrew to attend John's ministry and baptism, and Andrew knew where to look for him. Perhaps the other disciple that was with him went out to seek some friend of his at the same time, but Andrew sped first: *He first findeth Simon*, who came only to attend on John, but has his expectations out-done; he meets with Jesus.

(2.) He told him whom they had found: *We have found the Messiah*. Observe,

[1.] he speaks *humbly*; not, "I have found," assuming the honour of the discovery to himself, but "*We have*," rejoicing that he had shared with others in it.

[2.] He speaks *exultingly*, and with triumph: *We have found* that pearl of great price, that true treasure; and, having found it, he proclaims it as those lepers, ~~109~~ 2 Kings 7:9, for he knows that he shall have never the less in Christ for others sharing.

[3.] He speaks *intelligently*: *We have found the Messiah*, which was more than had yet been said. John had said, *He is the Lamb of God, and the Son of God*, which Andrew compares with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and, comparing them together, concludes that he is the Messiah promised to the fathers, for it is now that the fulness of time is come. Thus, by *making God's testimonies his meditation*, he speaks more clearly concerning Christ than ever *his teacher* had done, ~~110~~ Psalm 119:99.

(3.) He *brought him to Jesus*; would not undertake to instruct him himself, but brought him to the fountain-head, persuaded him to come to Christ and introduced him. Now this was,

[1.] An instance of true love to his brother, *his own* brother, so he is called here, because he was very dear to him. Note, We ought with a particular concern and application to seek the spiritual welfare of those that are related to us; for their relation to us adds both to the *obligation* and to the *opportunity* of doing good to their souls.

[2.] It was an effect of his day's conversation with Christ. Note, the best evidence of our profiting by the means of grace is the piety and usefulness of our conversation afterwards. Hereby it appeared that Andrew had *been with Jesus* that he was so full of him, that he had been *in the mount*, for his face shone. He knew there was enough in Christ for all; and, having tasted that he is gracious, he could not rest till those he loved had tasted it too. Note, True grace hates monopolies, and loves not to eat its morsels alone.

2. The *entertainment* which Jesus Christ gave to Peter, who was never the less welcome for his being influenced by his brother to come, v. 42. Observe,

(1.) Christ called him by his name: *When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona*. It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ, and if so,

[1.] It was a proof of Christ's omniscience that upon the first sight, without any enquiry, he could tell the name both of him and of his father. *The Lord knows them that are his*, and their whole case. However,

[2.] It was an instance of his condescending grace and favour, that he did thus freely and affably call him by his name, though he was of mean extraction, and *vir nullius nominis* — *a man of no name*. It was an instance of God's favour to Moses that he *knew him by name*, ^{<1237>}Exodus 33:17. Some observe the signification of these names: *Simon* — *obedient*, *Jona* — *a dove*. An obedient dove-like spirit qualifies us to be the disciples of Christ.

(2.) He gave him a new name: *Cephas*.

[1.] His giving him a name intimates *Christ's favour* to him. A new name denotes some great dignity, ^{<4017>}Revelation 2:17; ^{<2371>}Isaiah 62:2. By this Christ not only wiped off the reproach of his mean and obscure parentage, but adopted him into his family as one of his own.

[2.] The name which he gave him bespeaks his *fidelity* to Christ: *Thou shalt be called Cephas* (that is Hebrew for *a stone*), *which is by interpretation Peter*; so it should be rendered, as ^{<4486>}Acts 9:36. *Tabitha*, *which by interpretation is called Dorcas*; the former Hebrew, the latter Greek, for a *young roe*. Peter's natural temper was stiff, and hardy, and resolute, which I take to be the principal reason why Christ called him *Cephas* — *a stone*. When Christ afterwards prayed for him, that his faith

might not fail, that so he might be firm to Christ himself, and at the same time bade him *strengthen his brethren*, and lay out himself for the support of others, then he *made him* what he here called him, *Cephas — a stone*. Those that come to Christ must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, *like a stone*, solid and stedfast; and it is by his grace that they are so. His saying, *Be thou steady*, makes them so. Now this does no more prove that Peter was the singular or only rock upon which the church is built than the calling of James and John *Boanerges* proves them the only *sons of thunder*, or the calling of Joses *Barnabas* proves him the only *son of consolation*.

JOHN 1:43-51

THE CALL OF PHILIP AND NATHANAEL

We have here the call of Philip and Nathanael.

I. Philip was called immediately by Christ himself, not as Andrew, who was directed to Christ by John, or Peter, who was invited by his brother. God has various methods of bringing his chosen ones home to himself. But, whatever means he *uses*, he is not *tied* to any.

- 1.** Philip was called in a *preventing* was: *Jesus findeth Philip*. Christ sought us, and found us, before we made any enquiries after him. The name *Philip* is of Greek origin, and much used among the Gentiles, which some make an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, and their conformity to the nations; yet Christ changed not his name.
- 2.** He was called the *day following*. See how closely Christ applied himself to his business. When work is to be done for God, we must not *lose a day*. Yet observe, Christ now called one or two a day; but, after the Spirit was poured out, there were thousands a day effectually called, in which was fulfilled ~~AND~~ John 14:12.
- 3.** Jesus *would go forth into Galilee* to call him. Christ will find out all those that are given to him, wherever they are, and none of them shall be lost.

4. Philip was brought to be a disciple by the power of Christ going along with that word, *Follow me*. See the nature of true Christianity; it is

following Christ, devoting ourselves to his converse and conduct, attending his movements, and treading in his steps. See the efficacy of the grace of it is the rod of his strength.

5. We are told that Philip was of Bethsaida, and Andrew and Peter were so too, v. 44. These eminent disciples received not honour from the place of their nativity, but reflected honour upon it. *Bethsaida* signifies the *house of nets*, because inhabited mostly by fishermen; thence Christ chose disciples, who were to be furnished with extraordinary gifts, and therefore needed not the ordinary advantages of learning. Bethsaida was a wicked place (⁴¹²Matthew 11:21), yet even *there* was a remnant, according to the election of grace.

II. Nathanael was invited to Christ by Philip, and much is said concerning him. In which we may observe,

1. What passed between Philip and Nathanael, in which appears an observable mixture of pious zeal with weakness, such as is usually found in beginners, that are yet but *asking the way to Zion*. Here is,

(1.) The joyful news that Philip brought to Nathanael, v. 45. As Andrew before, so Philip here, having got some knowledge of Christ himself, rests not till he has *made manifest the savour of that knowledge*. Philip, though newly come to an acquaintance with Christ himself, yet steps aside to seek Nathanael. Note, When we have the fairest opportunities of getting good to our own souls, yet ever then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others, remembering the words of Christ, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, ⁴¹³Acts 20:35. O, saith Philip, *we have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*, Observe here,

[1.] What a transport of joy Philip was in, upon this new acquaintance with Christ: “We have found him whom we have so often talked of, so long wished and waited for; at last, *he is come he is come*, and we have found him!”

[2.] What an advantage it was to him that he was so well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which prepared his mind for the reception of evangelical light, and made the entrance of it much the more easy: *Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*. What was written entirely and from eternity in the *book of the divine counsels* was in part, at sundry times and in divers manners, copied out into the book of the *divine*

revelations. Glorious things were written there concerning the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, Shiloh, the prophet like Moses, the Son of David, Emmanuel, the Man, the Branch, Messiah the Prince. Philip had studied these things, and was full of them, which made him readily welcome Christ.

[3.] What mistakes and weaknesses he laboured under: he called Christ *Jesus of Nazareth*, whereas he was of *Bethlehem*; and the *Son of Joseph*, whereas he as but his *supposed* Son. Young beginners in religion are subject to mistakes, which time and the grace of God will rectify. It was his weakness to say, *We have found him*, for Christ found them before they found Christ. He did not yet *apprehend*, as Paul did, how he was *apprehended of Christ Jesus*, ^{STB2}Philippians 3:12.

(2.) The objection which Nathanael made against this, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* v. 46. Here,

[1.] His *caution* was commendable, that he did not lightly assent to every thing that was said, but took it into examination; our rule is, *Prove all things*. But,

[2.] His objection arose from Ignorance. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth it was owing to his ignorance of the divine grace, as if that were less affected to one place than another, or tied itself to men's foolish and ill-natured observations. If he meant that the Messiah, that great good thing, could not come out of Nazareth, so far he was right (Moses, in the law, said that he should come out of Judah, and the prophets had assigned Bethlehem for the place of his nativity); but then he was ignorant of the matter of *fact*, that this Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so that the blunder Philip made, in calling him *Jesus of Nazareth*, occasioned this objection. Note, The mistakes of preachers often give rise to the prejudices of hearers.

(3.) The short reply which Philip gave to this objection: *Come and see*.

[1.] It was his *weakness* that he could not give a satisfactory answer to it; yet it is the common case of young beginners in religion. We may *know* enough to *satisfy* ourselves, and yet not be able to *say* enough to *silence* the cavils of a subtle adversary.

[2.] It was his *wisdom* and zeal that, when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could: *Come and see*.

Let us not stand arguing here, and raising difficulties to ourselves which we cannot get over; let us go and converse with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. Note, It is folly to spend that time in doubtful disputation which might be better spent, and to much better purpose, in the exercises of piety and devotion. *Come and see*; not, *Go and see*, but, “*Come, and I will go along with thee*,” as ^{<300>}Isaiah 2:3; ^{<300>}Jeremiah 1:5. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, *First*, That many people are kept from the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived against religion, upon the account of some foreign circumstances which do not at all touch the merits of the case. *Secondly*, The best way to remove the prejudices they have entertained against religion is to prove themselves, and make trial of it. Let us not answer this matter before we hear it.

2. What passed between Nathanael and our Lord Jesus. He came and *saw*, not in vain.

(1.) Our Lord Jesus bore a very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity: *Jesus saw him* coming, and met him with favourable encouragement; he said of him to those about him, Nathanael himself being within hearing, *Behold an Israelite indeed*. Observe,

[1.] That he *commended* him; not to flatter him, or puff him up with a good conceit of himself, but perhaps because he knew him to be a *modest* man, if not a *melancholy* man, one that had hard and mean thoughts of himself, was ready to doubt his own sincerity; and Christ by this testimony put the matter out of doubt. Nathanael had, more than any of the candidates, objected against Christ; but Christ hereby showed that he excused it, and was not extreme to mark what he had said amiss, because he knew his heart was upright. He did not retort upon him, *Can any good thing come out of Cana* (^{<300>}John 21:2), an obscure town in Galilee? But kindly gives him this character, to encourage us to hope for acceptance with Christ, notwithstanding our weakness, and to teach us to speak honourably of those who without cause have spoken slightly of us, and to give them their due praise.

[2.] That he commended him for his *integrity*. *First, Behold an Israelite indeed*. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are *indeed*; we can but *hope the best*. The whole nation were Israelites in name, but *all are not Israel that are of Israel* (^{<300>}Romans 9:6); here, however, was *an Israelite indeed*.

1. A sincere follower of the good example of Israel, whose character it was that he was a *plain man*, in opposition to Esau's character of a *cunning man*. He was a genuine son of *honest Jacob*, not only of his *seed*, but of his *spirit*.

2. A sincere professor of the faith of Israel; he was true to the religion he professed, and lived up to it: he was really as good as he seemed, and his practice was *of a piece* with his profession. He is the Jew that is one *inwardly* (^{<812>}Romans 2:29), so is he *the Christian*. *Secondly*, He is one in whom is *no guile* — that is the character of an Israelite indeed, a Christian indeed: *no guile* towards men; a man without trick or design; a man that one may trust; *no guile* towards God, that is, sincere in his repentance for sin; sincere in his covenanting with God; in whose spirit is *no guile*, ^{<810>}Psalms 32:2. He does not say without *guilt*, but without *guile*. Though in many things he is foolish and forgetful, yet in nothing false, nor *wickedly departing from God*: there is no allowed approved guilt in him; not painted, though he have his spots: “Behold this Israelite indeed.”

1. “Take notice of him, that you may learn his way, and do like him.”

2. “Admire him; *behold*, and *wonder*.” The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had so leavened the Jewish church and nation, and their religion was so degenerated into formality or state-policy, that an Israelite indeed was a *man wondered at*, a miracle of divine grace, like Job, ^{<810>}Job 1:8.

(2.) Nathanael is much surprised at this, upon which Christ gives him a further proof of his omniscency, and a kind memorial of his former devotion.

[1.] Here is Nathanael's modesty, in that he was soon put out of countenance at the kind notice Christ was pleased to take of him: “Whence knowest thou me, me that am unworthy of thy cognizance? *who am I, O Lord God?*” ^{<107>}2 Samuel 7:18. This was an evidence of his sincerity, that he did not catch at the praise he met with, but declined it. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves; we know not what is in a man's heart by looking in his face, but all things are naked and open before Christ, ^{<810>}Hebrews 4:12, 13. Doth Christ know us? Let us covet to know him.

[2.] Here is Christ's further *manifestation* of himself to him: *Before Philip called thee, I saw thee*. *First*, He gives him to understand that he *knew*

him, and so manifests his divinity. It is God's prerogative infallibly to know all persons and all things; by this Christ proved himself to be God upon many occasions. It was prophesied concerning the Messiah that he should be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, that is, in judging the sincerity and degree of the fear of God in others, and that he should not *judge after the sight of his eyes*, ^{<211E>}Isaiah 11:2, 3. Here he answers that prediction. See ^{<52D>}2 Timothy 2:19. *Secondly*, That before Philip called him he saw him under the fig-tree; this manifests a particular kindness for him.

1. His eye was towards him before Philip called him, which was the first time that ever Nathanael was acquainted with Christ. Christ has knowledge of us before we have any knowledge of him; see ^{<364>}Isaiah 45:4; ^{<40D>}Galatians 4:9.

2. His eye was upon him when he as *under the fig-tree*; this was a private token which nobody understood but Nathanael: "When thou wast retired *under the fig-tree* in thy garden, and thoughtest that no eye saw thee, I have then my eye upon thee, and saw that which was very acceptable." It is most probable that Nathanael under the fig-tree was employed, as Isaac in the field, in meditation, and prayer, and communion with God. Perhaps then and there it was that he solemnly joined himself to the Lord in an inviolable covenant. Christ saw in secret, and by this public notice of it did in part reward him openly. *Sitting under the fig-tree* denotes quietness and composedness of spirit, which much befriend communion with God. See ^{<304>}Micah 4:4; ^{<36D>}Zechariah 3:10. Nathanael herein was an Israelite indeed, that, like Israel, he *wrestled with God alone* (^{<032>}Genesis 32:24), prayed not like the hypocrites, in the corners of the streets, but under the fig-tree.

(3.) Nathanael hereby obtained a full assurance of faith in Jesus Christ, expressed in that noble acknowledgment (v. 49): *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel*; that is, in short, thou art the true Messiah. Observe here,

[1.] How *firmly* he believed *with the heart*. Though he had lately laboured under some prejudices concerning Christ, they had now all vanished. Note, The grace of God, in working faith, casts down imaginations. Now he asks no more, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* For he believes Jesus of Nazareth to be the chief good, and embraces him accordingly.

[2.] How *freely* he confessed *with the mouth*. His confession is made in form of an adoration, directed to our Lord Jesus himself, which is a proper way of confessing our faith. *First*, He confesses Christ's prophetic office, in calling him *Rabbi*, a title which the Jews commonly gave to their teachers. Christ is the great rabbi, at whose feet we must all be *brought up*. *Secondly*, He confesses his divine nature and mission, in calling him the Son of God (that Son of God spoken of ^{111B}Psalm 2:7); though he had but a human *form* and *aspect*, yet having a divine knowledge, the knowledge of the heart, and of things distant and secret, Nathanael thence concludes him to be the *Son of God*. *Thirdly*, He confesses, "*Thou art the king of Israel; that king of Israel whom we have been long waiting for.*" If he be the Son of God, he is king of the Israel of God. Nathanael hereby proves himself an Israelite indeed that he so readily owns and submits to the king of Israel.

(4.) Christ hereupon raises the hopes and expectations of Nathanael to something further and greater than all this, v. 50, 51. Christ is very tender of young converts, and will encourage good beginnings, though weak, ^{112D}Matthew 12:20.

[1.] He here signifies his acceptance, and (it should seem) his admiration, of the ready faith of Nathanael: *Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?* He wonders that such a small indication of Christ's divine knowledge should have such an effect; it was a sign that Nathanael's heart was prepared beforehand, else the work had not been done so suddenly. Note, It is much for the honour of Christ and his grace, when the heart is surrendered to him at the first summons.

[2.] He promises him much greater helps for the confirmation and increase of his faith than he had had for the first production of it.

First, In general: "*Thou shalt see greater things than these*, stronger proofs of my being the Messiah;" the miracles of Christ, and his resurrection. Note,

1. To him that hath, and maketh good use of what he hath, more shall be given.
2. Those who truly believe the gospel will find its evidences grow upon them, and will see more and more cause to believe it.

3. Whatever discoveries Christ is pleased to make of himself to his people while they are here in this world, he hath still greater things than these to make known to them; a glory yet further *to be revealed*.

Secondly, In particular: “Not thou only, but you, all you my disciples, whose faith this is intended for the confirmation of, you *shall see heaven opened*,” this is more than telling Nathanael of his being under the fig-tree. This is introduced with a solemn preface, *Verily, verily I say unto you*, which commands both a *fixed attention* to what is said as very weighty, and a *full assent* to it as undoubtedly true: “I say it, whose word you may rely upon, *amen, amen*.” None used this word at the beginning of a sentence but Christ, though the Jews often used it at the close of a prayer, and sometimes doubled it. It is a solemn asseveration. Christ is called the *Amen* (~~in~~ Revelation 3:14), and so some take it here, *I the Amen, the Amen, say unto you*. I the faithful witness. Note, The assurances we have of the glory to be revealed are built upon the word of Christ. Now see what it is that Christ assures them of: *Hereafter*, or *within awhile*, or *ere long*, or henceforth, ye shall see heaven opened.

a. It is a mean title that Christ here takes to himself: *The Son of man*; a title frequently applied to him in the gospel, but always by himself. Nathanael had called him the *Son of God* and *king of Israel*: he calls himself *Son of man*,

(a.) To express his *humility* in the midst of the honours done him.

(b.) To teach his *humanity*, which is to be believed as well as his divinity.

(c.) To intimate his present state of humiliation, that Nathanael might not expect this king of Israel to appear in external pomp.

b. Yet they are great things which he here foretels: *You shall see heaven opened*, and *the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man*.

(a.) Some understand it literally, as pointing at some particular event. Either,

[a.] There was some vision of Christ's glory, in which this was exactly fulfilled, which Nathanael was an eye-witness of, as Peter, and James, and John were of his transfiguration. There were many things which

Christ did, and those in the presence of his disciples, which were not written (^{<RB>}John 20:30), and why not this? Or,

[b.] It was fulfilled in the many ministrations of the angels to our Lord Jesus, especially that at his ascension, when heaven was opened to receive him, and the angels *ascended* and *descended*, to attend him and to do him honour, and this in the sight of the disciples. Christ's ascension was the great proof of his mission, and much confirmed the faith of his disciples, (^{<RB>}John 6:62. Or,

[c.] It may refer to Christ's second coming, to judge the world, when the heavens shall be *open*, and every eye shall see him, and the angels of God shall ascend and descend about him, as attendants on him, every one employed; and a busy day it will be. See (^{<SB>}2 Thessalonians 1:10.

(b.) Others take it figuratively, as speaking of a state or series of things to commence *from henceforth*; and so we may understand it,

[a.] Of Christ's *miracles*. Nathanael believed, because Christ, as the prophets of old, could tell him things secret; but what is this? Christ is now beginning a dispensation of miracles, much more great and strange than this, as if heaven were opened; and such a power shall be exerted by the Son of man as if the angels, which excel in strength, were continually attending his orders. Immediately after this, Christ began to work miracles, (^{<RB>}John 2:11. Or,

[b.] Of his *mediation*, and that blessed intercourse which he hath settled between heaven and earth, which his disciples should be degrees be let into the mystery of. *First*, By Christ, as Mediator, they shall see *heaven opened*, that we may *enter into the holiest* by his blood (^{<SB>}Hebrews 10:19, 20); heaven opened, that by faith we may *look in*, and at length may *go in*; may now behold the glory of the Lord, and hereafter enter into the joy of our Lord. And, *Secondly*, They shall see *angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man*. Through Christ we have communion with and benefit by the holy angels, and things in heaven and things on earth are *reconciled* and *gathered together*. Christ is to us as Jacob's ladder (^{<SB>}Genesis 28:12), by whom angels continually ascend and descend for the good of the saints.