

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
JOHN**  
*Commentary by David Brown*

## INTRODUCTION

The author of the Fourth Gospel was the younger of the two sons of Zebedee, a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, who resided at Bethsaida, where were born Peter and Andrew his brother, and Philip also. His mother's name was Salome, who, though not without her imperfections (Mt 20:20-28), was one of those dear and honored women who accompanied the Lord on one of His preaching circuits through Galilee, ministering to His bodily wants; who followed Him to the cross, and bought sweet spices to anoint Him after His burial, but, on bringing them to the grave, on the morning of the First Day of the week, found their loving services gloriously superseded by His resurrection ere they arrived. His father, Zebedee, appears to have been in good circumstances, owning a vessel of his own and having hired servants (Mr 1:20). Our Evangelist, whose occupation was that of a fisherman with his father, was beyond doubt a disciple of the Baptist, and one of the two who had the first interview with Jesus. He was called while engaged at his secular occupation (Mt 4:21, 22), and again on a memorable occasion (Lu 5:1-11), and finally chosen as one of the Twelve Apostles (Mt 10:2). He was the youngest of the Twelve—the "Benjamin," as Da Costa calls him—and he and James his brother were named in the native tongue by Him who knew the heart, "Boanerges," which the Evangelist Mark (Mr 3:17) explains to mean "Sons of thunder"; no doubt from their natural *vehemence* of *character*. They and Peter constituted that select triumvirate of whom see on Lu 9:28. But the highest honor bestowed on this disciple was his being admitted to the bosom place with his Lord at the table, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Joh 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20:24), and to have committed to him by the dying Redeemer the care of His mother (Joh 19:26, 27). There can be no reasonable doubt that this distinction was due to a sympathy with His own spirit and mind on the part of John which the all-penetrating Eye of their common Master beheld in none of the rest; and although this was probably never seen either in his life or in his ministry by his fellow apostles, it is brought out wonderfully in his writings, which, in Christ-like spirituality, heavenliness, and love, surpass, we may freely say, all the other inspired writings.

After the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we find him in constant but silent company with Peter, the great spokesman and actor in the infant Church until the accession of Paul. While his love to the Lord Jesus drew him spontaneously to the side of His eminent servant, and his chastened vehemence made him ready to stand courageously by him, and suffer with him, in all that his testimony to Jesus might cost him, his modest humility, as the youngest of all the apostles, made him an admiring listener and faithful supporter of his brother apostle rather than a speaker or separate actor. Ecclesiastical history is uniform in testifying that John went to Asia Minor; but it is next to certain that this could not have been till after the death both of Peter and Paul; that he resided at Ephesus, whence, as from a center, he superintended the churches of that region, paying them occasional visits; and that he long survived the other apostles. Whether the mother of Jesus died before this, or

went with John to Ephesus, where she died and was buried, is not agreed. One or two anecdotes of his later days have been handed down by tradition, one at least bearing marks of reasonable probability. But it is not necessary to give them here. In the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) he was banished to "the isle that is called Patmos" (a small rocky and then almost uninhabited island in the Ægean Sea), "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" ([Re 1:9](#)). Irenæus and Eusebius say that this took place about the end of Domitian's reign. That he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, and miraculously delivered, is one of those legends which, though reported by Tertullian and Jerome, is entitled to no credit. His return from exile took place during the brief but tolerant reign of Nerva; he died at Ephesus in the reign of Trajan [Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.23], at an age above ninety, according to some; according to others, one hundred; and even one hundred twenty, according to others still. The intermediate number is generally regarded as probably the nearest to the truth.

As to the *date* of this Gospel, the arguments for its having been composed before the destruction of Jerusalem (though relied on by some superior critics) are of the slenderest nature; such as the expression in [Joh 5:2](#), "there *is* at Jerusalem, by the sheep-gate, a pool," &c.; there being no allusion to Peter's martyrdom as having occurred according to the prediction in [Joh 21:18](#)—a thing too well known to require mention. That it was composed long after the destruction of Jerusalem, and after the decease of all the other apostles, is next to certain, though the precise time cannot be determined. Probably it was before his banishment, however; and if we date it between the years 90 and 94, we shall probably be close to the truth.

As to the *readers* for whom it was more immediately designed, that they were Gentiles we might naturally presume from the lateness of the date; but the multitude of explanations of things familiar to every Jew puts this beyond all question.

No doubt was ever thrown upon the genuineness and authenticity of this Gospel till about the close of the eighteenth century; nor were these embodied in any formal attack upon it till Bretschneider, in 1820, issued his famous treatise [*Probabilia*], the conclusions of which he afterwards was candid enough to admit had been satisfactorily disproved. To advert to these would be as painful as unnecessary; consisting as they mostly do of assertions regarding the Discourses of our Lord recorded in this Gospel which are revolting to every spiritual mind. The Tubingen school did their best, on their peculiar mode of reasoning, to galvanize into fresh life this theory of the post-Joannean date of the Fourth Gospel; and some Unitarian critics still cling to it. But to use the striking language of Van Oosterzee regarding similar speculations on the Third Gospel, "Behold, the feet of them that shall carry it out dead are already at the door" ([Ac 5:9](#)). Is there one mind of the least elevation of spiritual discernment that does not see in this Gospel marks of historical truth and a surpassing glory such as none of the other Gospels possess, brightly as they too attest their own

verity; and who will not be ready to say that if not historically true, and true *just as it stands*, it never could have been by mortal man composed or conceived?

Of the peculiarities of this Gospel, we note here only two. The one is its *reflective* character. While the others are purely *narrative*, the Fourth Evangelist, "pauses, as it were, at every turn," as Da Costa says [*Four Witnesses*, p. 234], "at one time to give a reason, at another to fix the attention, to deduce consequences, or make applications, or to give utterance to the language of praise." See [Joh 2:20, 21, 23-25](#); [4:1, 2](#); [7:37-39](#); [11:12, 13, 49-52](#); [21:18, 19, 22, 23](#). The other peculiarity of this Gospel is its *supplementary* character. By this, in the present instance, we mean something more than the studiousness with which he omits many most important particulars in our Lord's history, for no conceivable reason but that they were already familiar as household words to all his readers, through the three preceding Gospels, and his substituting in place of these an immense quantity of the richest matter not found in the other Gospels. We refer here more particularly to the *nature* of the additions which distinguish this Gospel; particularly the notices of the different Passovers which occurred during our Lord's public ministry, and the record of His teaching at Jerusalem, without which it is not too much to say that we could have had but a most imperfect conception either of the duration of His ministry or of the plan of it. But another feature of these additions is quite as noticeable and not less important. "We find," to use again the words of Da Costa [*Four Witnesses*, pp. 238, 239], slightly abridged, "only six of our Lord's miracles recorded in this Gospel, but these are all of the most remarkable kind, and surpass the rest in depth, specialty of application, and fulness of meaning. Of these six we find only one in the other three Gospels—the multiplication of the loaves. That miracle chiefly, it would seem, on account of the important instructions of which it furnished the occasion ([Joh 6:1-71](#)), is here recorded anew. The five other tokens of divine power are distinguished from among the many recorded in the three other Gospels by their furnishing a still higher display of power and command over the ordinary laws and course of nature. Thus we find recorded here the first of all the miracles that Jesus wrought—the changing of water into wine ([Joh 2:1-11](#)), the cure of the nobleman's son *at a distance* ([Joh 4:43-54](#)); of the numerous cures of the lame and the paralytic by the word of Jesus, only one—of the man impotent for *thirty and eight years* ([Joh 5:1-9](#)); of the many cures of the blind, one only—of the man *born blind* ([Joh 9:1-12](#)); the restoration of Lazarus, not from a deathbed, like Jairus' daughter, nor from a bier, like the widow of Nain's son, but *from the grave*, and after lying there four days, and there sinking into corruption ([Joh 11:1-44](#)); and lastly, after His resurrection, the miraculous draught of fishes on the Sea of Tiberias ([Joh 21:5-11](#)). But these are all recorded chiefly to give occasion for the record of those astonishing discourses and conversations, alike with friends and with foes, with His disciples and with the multitude which they drew forth."

Other illustrations of the peculiarities of this Gospel will occur, and other points connected with it be adverted to, in the course of the Commentary.

## CHAPTER 1

[Joh 1:1-14](#). The Word Made Flesh.

**1. In the beginning**—of all time and created existence, for this Word gave it being ([Joh 1:3, 10](#)); therefore, "before the world was" ([Joh 17:5, 24](#)); or, from all eternity.

**was the Word**—He *who is to God what man's word is to himself, the manifestation or expression of himself to those without him*. (See on [Joh 1:18](#)). On the *origin* of this most lofty and now for ever consecrated title of Christ, this is not the place to speak. It occurs only in the writings of this seraphic apostle.

**was with God**—having a conscious personal existence *distinct from God* (as one is from the person he is "with"), but *inseparable from Him and associated with Him* ([Joh 1:18](#); [Joh 17:5](#); [1Jo 1:2](#)), where "THE Father" is used in the same sense as "God" here.

**was God**—in substance and essence God; or was possessed of essential or proper divinity. Thus, each of these brief but pregnant statements is the complement of the other, correcting any misapprehensions which the others might occasion. Was the Word *eternal*? It was *not* the eternity of "*the Father*," but of a conscious personal existence *distinct from Him and associated with Him*. Was the Word thus "with God?" It was not the distinctness and the fellowship of *another being*, as if there were *more Gods than one*, but of One who was *Himself God*—in such sense that the *absolute unity* of the God head, the great principle of all religion, is only transferred from the region of shadowy abstraction to the region of essential life and love. But why all this definition? Not to give us any *abstract information* about certain mysterious distinctions in the Godhead, but solely to let the reader know *who it was that* in the fulness of time "*was made flesh*." After each verse, then, the reader must say, "It was He who is thus, and thus, and thus described, who was made flesh."

**2. The same, &c.**—See what property of the Word the stress is laid upon—His *eternal distinctness*, in unity, from God—the Father ([Joh 1:2](#)).

**3. All things, &c.**—all things *absolutely* (as is evident from [Joh 1:10](#); [1Co 8:6](#); [Col 1:16, 17](#); but put beyond question by what follows).

**without Him was not any thing**—*not one thing*.

**made**—brought into being.

**that was made**—This is a denial of the *eternity* and *non-creation* of matter, which was held by the whole thinking world *outside of Judaism and Christianity*: or rather, its proper *creation* was never so much as dreamt of save by the children of *revealed religion*.

**4. In Him was life**—*essentially* and *originally*, as the previous verses show to be the meaning. Thus He is *the Living Word*, or, as He is called in [1Jo 1:1, 2](#), "the Word of Life."

**the life ... the light of men**—All that in men which is *true light*—knowledge, integrity, intelligent, willing subjection to God, love to Him and to their fellow creatures, wisdom, purity, holy joy, rational happiness—all this "light of men" has its fountain in the essential original "life" of "the Word" ([1Jo 1:5-7](#); [Ps 36:9](#)).

**5. shineth in darkness, &c.**—in this dark, fallen world, or in mankind "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," *with no ability to find the way either of truth or of holiness*. In this thick darkness, and consequent intellectual and moral obliquity, "the light of the Word" shineth—*by all the rays whether of natural or revealed teaching which men* (apart from the Incarnation of the Word) *are favored with*.

**the darkness comprehended it not**—*did not take it in*, a brief summary of the effect of all the strivings of this *unincarnate* Word throughout this wide world from the beginning, and a hint of the necessity of His putting on *flesh*, if any recovery of men was to be effected (1Co 1:21).

**6-9.** The Evangelist here *approaches* his grand thesis, so paving his way for the full statement of it in Joh 1:14, that we may be able to bear the bright light of it, and take in its length and breadth and depth and height.

**7. through him**—John.

**8. not that Light**—(See on Joh 5:35). What a testimony to John to have to explain that "he was *not* that Light!" Yet was he but a foil to set it off, his night-taper dwindling before the Dayspring from on high (Joh 3:30).

**9. lighteth every man, &c.**—rather, "which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man"; or, is "the Light of the world" (Joh 9:5). "Coming into the world" is a superfluous and quite unusual description of "every man"; but it is of all descriptions of Christ amongst the most familiar, especially in the writings of this Evangelist (Joh 12:46; 16:28; 18:37; 1Jo 4:9; 1Ti 1:15, &c.).

**10-13. He was in the world, &c.**—The language here is nearly as wonderful as the thought. Observe its compact simplicity, its sonorousness—"the world" resounding in each of its three members—and the enigmatic form in which it is couched, startling the reader and setting his ingenuity a-working to solve the stupendous enigma of *Christ ignored in His own world*. "The world," in the first two clauses, plainly means the *created* world, *into* which *He* came, says Joh 1:9; "*in* it He was," says this verse. By His Incarnation, He became *an inhabitant of it*, and bound up with it. Yet it "was made by Him" (Joh 1:3-5). Here, then, it is merely alluded to, in contrast partly with His being *in* it, but still more with the reception He met with from it. "The world that knew Him not" (1Jo 3:1) is of course the intelligent world of mankind. (See on Joh 1:11,12). Taking the first two clauses as one statement, we try to apprehend it by thinking of the infant Christ conceived in the womb and born in the arms of His own creature, and of the Man Christ Jesus breathing His own air, treading His own ground, supported by substances to which He Himself gave being, and the Creator of the very men whom He came to save. But the most vivid commentary on this entire verse will be got by tracing (in His matchless history) Him of whom it speaks walking amidst all the elements of nature, the diseases of men and death itself, the secrets of the human heart, and "the rulers of the darkness of this world" in all their number, subtlety, and malignity,

not only with absolute ease, as their conscious Lord, but, as we might say, with full consciousness on their part of the presence of their Maker, whose will to one and all of them was law. And this is He of whom it is added, "the world knew Him not!"

**11. his own**—"His own" (property or possession), for the word is in the *neuter* gender. It means His own land, city, temple, Messianic rights and possessions.

**and his own**—"His own (people)"; for now the word is *masculine*. It means the Jews, as the "peculiar people." Both *they* and their *land*, with all that this included, were "His own," not so much as part of "the world which was made by Him," but as "THE HEIR" of the inheritance (Lu 20:14; see also on Mt 22:1).

**received him not**—*nationally*, as God's chosen witnesses.

**12. But as many**—*individuals*, of the "disobedient and gainsaying people."

**gave he power**—The word signifies both *authority* and *ability*, and both are certainly meant here.

**to become**—Mark these words: Jesus is the Son of God; He is never said to have become such.

**the sons**—or more simply, "sons of God," in *name* and in *nature*.

**believe on his name**—*a phrase never used in Scripture of any mere creature*, to express the credit given to human testimony, even of prophets or apostles, inasmuch it carries with it the idea of *trust* proper only towards God. In this sense of *supreme faith*, as due to Him who "gives those that *believe in Himself* power to become sons of God," it is manifestly used here.

**13. Which were born**—a sonship therefore not of mere title and privilege, but of *nature*, the soul being made conscious of the vital capacities, perceptions, and emotions of *a child of God*, before unknown.

**not of blood, &c.**—not of superior human descent, not of human generation at all, not of man in any manner of way. By this elaborate threefold denial of the *human* source of this sonship, immense force is given to what follows,

**but of God**—Right royal gift, and He who confers must be absolutely divine. For who would not worship Him who can bring him into the family, and evoke within him the very life, of the sons of God?

**14. And the Word, &c.**—*To raise the reader to the altitude of this climax were the thirteen foregoing verses written.*

**was made flesh**—BECAME MAN, in man's present frail, mortal condition, denoted by the word "flesh" (Isa 40:6; 1Pe 1:24). It is directed probably against the *Docetæ*, who held that Christ was not really but only *apparently* man; against whom this gentle spirit is vehement in his Epistles (1Jo 4:3; 2Jo 7, 10, 11), [Lucke, &c.]. Nor could He be too much so, for with the verity of the Incarnation all substantial Christianity vanishes. But now, married to our nature, henceforth He is as *personally conscious of all that is strictly human as of all that*

*is properly divine*; and our nature is in His Person redeemed and quickened, ennobled and transfigured.

**and dwelt**—tabernacled or pitched his tent; a word peculiar to John, who uses it four times, all in the sense of a *permanent stay* (Re 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3). For ever wedded to our *flesh*, He has entered this tabernacle to "go no more out." The allusion is to that tabernacle where dwelt the *Shekinah* (see on Mt 23:38, 39), or manifested "Glory of the Lord," and with reference to God's *permanent dwelling among His people* (Le 26:11; Ps 68:18; 132:13, 14; Eze 37:27). This is put almost beyond doubt by what immediately follows, "And we beheld his glory" [Lucke, Meyer, De Wette which last critic, rising higher than usual, says that thus were perfected all former partial manifestations of God in an *essentially Personal and historically Human* manifestation].

**full of grace and truth**—So it should read: "He dwelt among us full of grace and truth"; or, in Old Testament phrase, "Mercy and truth," denoting the whole fruit of God's purposes of love towards sinners of mankind, which until now existed only in *promise*, and the *fulfillment* at length of that promise in Christ; in one great word, "*the SURE MERCIES of David*" (Isa 55:3; Ac 13:34; compare 2Sa 23:5). In His Person all that Grace and Truth which had been floating so long in shadowy forms, and darting into the souls of the poor and needy its broken beams, took everlasting possession of human flesh and filled it full. By this Incarnation of Grace and Truth, the teaching of thousands of years was at once transcended and beggared, and the family of God sprang into Manhood.

**and we beheld his glory**—not by the eye of *sense*, which saw in Him only "the carpenter." His glory was "spiritually discerned" (1Co 2:7-15; 2Co 3:18; 4:4, 6; 5:16)—the glory of surpassing grace, love, tenderness, wisdom, purity, spirituality; majesty and meekness, richness and poverty, power and weakness, meeting together in unique contrast; ever attracting and at times ravishing the "babes" that followed and forsook all for Him.

**the glory as of the only begotten of the Father**—(See on Lu 1:35); not *like*, but "such as (belongs to)," such as *became* or was *befitting* the only begotten of the Father [Chrysostom in Lucke, Calvin, &c.], according to a well-known use of the word "as."

Joh 1:15. A Saying of the Baptist Confirmatory of This.

**15. after me**—in *official manifestation*.

**before me**—in *rank and dignity*.

**for he was before me**—in *existence*; "His goings forth being from of old, from everlasting" (Mic 5:2). (Anything lower than this His words cannot mean); that is, "My Successor is my Superior, for He was my Predecessor." This enigmatic play upon the different senses of the words "before" and "after" was doubtless employed by the Baptist to arrest attention, and rivet the thought; and the Evangelist introduces it just to clinch his own statements.

Joh 1:16-18. Same Subject Continued.

**16. of his fulness**—of "grace and truth," resuming the thread of Joh 1:14.

**grace for grace**—that is, grace upon grace (so all the best interpreters), in successive communications and larger measures, as each was able to take it in. Observe, the word "truth" is here dropped. "Grace" being the chosen New Testament word for the whole fulness of the new covenant, all that dwells in Christ for men.

**17. For, &c.**—The Law elicits the consciousness of sin and the need of redemption; it only typifies the reality. The Gospel, on the contrary, actually communicates reality and power from above (compare [Ro 6:14](#)). Hence Paul terms the Old Testament "shadow," while he calls the New Testament "substance" ([Col 2:17](#)) [Olshausen].

**18. No man**—"No one," in the widest sense.

**hath seen God**—by immediate gaze, or direct intuition.

**in the bosom of the Father**—A remarkable expression, used only here, presupposing *the Son's conscious existence distinct from the Father, and expressing His immediate and most endeared access to, and absolute acquaintance with, Him.*

**he**—emphatic; As if he should say, "He and He only hath declared Him," because He only *can*.

[Joh 1:19-36](#). The Baptist's Testimony to Christ.

**19. record**—testimony.

**the Jews**—that is, the heads of the nation, the members of the Sanhedrim. *In this peculiar sense our Evangelist seems always to use the term.*

**20. confessed, &c.**—that is, While many were ready to hail him as the Christ, he neither gave the slightest ground for such views, nor the least entertainment to them.

**21. Elias**—in His own proper person.

**that prophet**—announced in [De 18:15](#), &c., about whom they seem not to have been agreed whether he were the same with the Messiah or no.

**25. Why baptizest thou, if not, &c.**—Thinking he disclaimed any special connection with Messiah's kingdom, they demand his right to gather disciples by baptism.

**26. there standeth**—This must have been spoken after the baptism of Christ, and possibly just after His temptation (see on [Joh 1:29](#)).

**28. Bethabara**—Rather, "Bethany" (according to nearly all the best and most ancient manuscripts); not the Bethany of Lazarus, but another of the same name, and distinguished from it as lying "beyond Jordan," on the east.

**29. seeth Jesus**—fresh, probably, from the scene of the temptation.

**coming unto him**—as to congenial company ([Ac 4:23](#)), and to receive from him His first greeting.

**and saith**—catching a sublime inspiration at the sight of Him approaching.

**the Lamb of God**—the one God-ordained, God-gifted sacrificial offering.

**that taketh away**—*taketh up* and *taketh away*. The word signifies both, as does the corresponding *Hebrew* word. Applied to sin, it means to *be chargeable with the guilt of it*

(Ex 28:38; Le 5:1; Eze 18:20), and to *bear it away* (as often). In the Levitical victims both ideas met, as they do in Christ, the people's guilt being viewed as *transferred* to them, *avenged* in their death, and so *borne away* by them (Le 4:15; 16:15, 21, 22; and compare Isa 53:6-12; 2Co 5:21).

**the sin**—The *singular* number being used to mark the *collective burden* and *all-embracing efficacy*.

**of the world**—not of Israel only, for whom the typical victims were exclusively offered. Wherever there shall live a sinner throughout the wide world, sinking under that burden too heavy for him to bear, he shall find in this "Lamb of God," a shoulder equal to the weight. The right note was struck at the first—balm, doubtless, to Christ's own spirit; nor was ever after, or ever will be, a more glorious utterance.

**31-34. knew him not**—Living mostly apart, the one at Nazareth, the other in the Judean desert—to prevent all appearance of collusion, John only knew that at a definite time after his own call, his Master would show Himself. As He drew near for baptism one day, the last of all the crowd, the spirit of the Baptist heaving under a divine presentiment that the moment had at length arrived, and an air of unwonted serenity and dignity, not without traits, probably, of the family features, appearing in this Stranger, the Spirit said to him as to Samuel of his youthful type, "Arise, anoint Him, for this is He!" (1Sa 16:12). But *the* sign which he was told to expect was the visible descent of the Spirit upon Him as He emerged out of the baptismal water. *Then*, catching up the voice from heaven, "he saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

**35. John stood**—"was standing," at his accustomed place.

**36. looking**—having fixed his eyes, with significant gaze, on Jesus.

**as he walked**—but not now *to him*. To have done this once (see on Joh 1:29) was humility enough [Bengel].

**Behold, &c.**—The repetition of that wonderful proclamation, in identical terms and without another word, could only have been meant as a gentle hint to go after Him—as they did.

**Joh 1:37-51.** First Gathering of Disciples—John Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael.

**38. What seek ye**—gentle, winning question, remarkable as the Redeemer's *first public utterance*. (See on Mt 12:18-20.)

**where dwellest thou**—that is, "That is a question we cannot answer in a moment; but had we Thy company for a calm hour in private, gladly should we open our burden."

**39. Come and see**—His *second utterance*, more winning still.

**tenth hour**—not ten A.M. (as some), according to *Roman*, but four P.M., according to *Jewish* reckoning, which John follows. The hour is mentioned to show why they stayed out the day with him—because little of it remained.

**40. One ... was Andrew**—The other was doubtless our Evangelist himself. His great sensitiveness is touchingly shown in his representation of this first contact with the Lord; the circumstances are present to him in the minutest details; he still remembers the Very hour. But "he reports no particulars of those discourses of the Lord by which he was bound to Him for the whole of His life; he allows everything personal to retire" [Olshausen].

**Peter's brother**—and the elder of the two.

**41. have found the Messiah**—The previous preparation of their simple hearts under the Baptist's ministry, made quick work of this blessed conviction, while others hesitated till doubt settled into obduracy. *So it is still.*

**42. brought him to Jesus**—Happy brothers that thus do to each other!

**beheld him**—fixed his eyes on him, with significant gaze (as [Joh 1:36](#)).

**Cephas ... stone**—(See on [Mt 16:18](#)).

**43. would go ... into Galilee**—for from His baptism He had sojourned in *Judea* (showing that the calling at the Sea of Galilee [[Mt 4:18](#)] was a *subsequent* one, see on [Lu 5:1](#)).

**Follow me**—the first express call given, the former three having come to Him spontaneously.

**44. the city of Andrew and Peter**—of their *birth* probably, for they seem to have *lived* at Capernaum ([Mr 1:29](#)).

**45. Nathanael**—(See on [Mt 10:3](#)).

**Moses**—(See [Joh 5:46](#)).

**son of Joseph**—the current way of speaking. (See [Lu 3:23](#)).

**46. any good out of Nazareth**—remembering Bethlehem, perhaps, as Messiah's predicted birthplace, and Nazareth having no *express* prophetic place at all, besides being in no repute. The question sprang from mere dread of mistake in a matter so vital.

**Come and see**—Noble remedy against preconceived opinions [Bengel]. Philip, though he could not perhaps solve his difficulty, could show him how to get rid of it. (See on [Joh 6:68](#)).

**47. an Israelite indeed ... no guile**—not only no hypocrite, but with a guileless simplicity not always found even in God's own people, ready to follow wherever truth might lead him, saying, Samuel-like, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" ([1Sa 3:10](#)).

**48. Whence knowest thou me**—conscious that his very heart had been read, and at this critical moment more than ever before.

**Before Philip called thee**—showing He knew all that passed between Philip and him at a distance.

**when ... under the fig tree, &c.**—where retirement for meditation and prayer was not uncommon [Lightfoot]. Thither, probably—hearing that his master's Master had at length appeared, and heaving with mingled eagerness to behold Him and dread of deception—he

had retired to pour out his guileless heart for light and guidance, ending with such a prayer as this, "Show me a token for good!" (See on [Lu 2:8](#)). Now he has it, "Thou guileless one, that fig tree scene, with all its heaving anxieties, deep pleadings and tremulous hopes—I saw it all." The first words of Jesus had astonished, but this quite overpowered and won him.

**49. Son of God ... King of Israel**—the one denoting His person, the other His office. How much loftier this than anything Philip had said to him! But just as the earth's vital powers, the longer they are frost-bound, take the greater spring when at length set free, so souls, like Nathanael and Thomas (see on [Joh 20:28](#)), the outgoings of whose faith are hindered for a time, take the start of their more easy-going brethren when loosed and let go.

**50, 51. Because I said, &c.**—"So quickly convinced, and on this evidence only?"—an expression of admiration.

**51. Hereafter, &c.**—The key to this great saying is Jacob's vision ([Ge 28:12-22](#)), to which the allusion plainly is. To show the patriarch that though alone and friendless on earth his interests were busying all heaven, he was made to see "heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon a" mystic "*ladder* reaching from heaven to earth." "By and by," says Jesus here, "ye shall see this communication between heaven and earth thrown wide open, and the *Son of man the real Ladder of this intercourse.*"

## CHAPTER 2

[Joh 2:1-12](#). First Miracle, Water Made Wine—Brief Visit to Capernaum.

**1. third day**—He would take two days to reach Galilee, and this was the third.

**mother there**—it being probably some relative's marriage. *John never names her* [Bengel].

**3. no wine**—evidently expecting some display of His glory, and hinting that now was His time.

**4, 5. Woman**—no term of disrespect in the language of that day ([Joh 19:26](#)).

**what ... to do with thee**—that is, "In my Father's business I have to do with Him only." It was a gentle rebuke for *officious interference*, entering a region from which all creatures were excluded (compare [Ac 4:19, 20](#)).

**mine hour**, &c.—hinting that He *would* do something, but at His own time; and so she understood it ([Joh 2:5](#)).

**6. firkins**—about seven and a half gallons in Jewish, or nine in Attic measure; each of these huge water jars, therefore, holding some twenty or more gallons, for washings at such feasts ([Mr 7:4](#)).

**7, 8. Fill ... draw ... bear**—directing all, but Himself touching nothing, to prevent all appearance of collusion.

**9, 10. well drunk**—"drunk abundantly" (as [So 5:1](#)), speaking of the general practice.

**10. the good wine ... until now**—thus testifying, while ignorant of the source of supply, not only that it was real wine, but better than any at the feast.

**11. manifested forth his glory**—Nothing in the least like this is said of the miracles of prophet or apostle, nor could without manifest blasphemy be said of any mere creature. Observe, (1) At a marriage Christ made His first public appearance in any company, and at a marriage He wrought His first miracle—the noblest sanction that could be given to that God-given institution. (2) As the miracle did not make *bad good*, but *good better*, so Christianity only redeems, sanctifies, and ennoble the beneficent but abused institution of marriage; and Christ's whole work only turns the water of earth into the wine of heaven. Thus "this beginning of miracles" exhibited the character and "manifested forth the glory" of His entire Mission. (3) As Christ countenanced our seasons of *festivity*, so also that greater *fulness* which befits such; so far was He from encouraging that *asceticism* which has since been so often put for all religion. (4) The character and authority ascribed by Romanists to the Virgin is directly in the teeth of this and other scriptures.

**12. Capernaum**—on the Sea of Galilee. (See on [Mt 9:1](#)).

**his mother and his brethren**—(See on [Lu 2:51](#), and [Mt 13:54-56](#)).

[Joh 2:13-25](#). Christ's First Passover—First Cleansing of the Temple.

**14-17. in the temple**—not the temple itself, as [Joh 2:19-21](#), but the *temple-court*.

**sold oxen**, &c.—for the convenience of those who had to offer them in sacrifice.

**changers of money**—of Roman into Jewish money, in which the temple dues (see on [Mt 17:24](#)) had to be paid.

**15. small cords**—likely some of the rushes spread for bedding, and when twisted used to tie up the cattle there collected. "Not by this slender whip but by divine majesty was the ejection accomplished, the whip being but a sign of the scourge of divine anger" [Grotius].

**poured out ... overthrew**—thus expressing the mingled indignation and authority of the impulse.

**16. my Father's house**—How close the resemblance of these remarkable words to [Lu 2:49](#); the same *consciousness of intrinsic relation to the temple*—as the seat of His Father's most august worship, and so the symbol of all that is due to Him on earth—dictating both speeches. Only, when but a youth, *with no authority*, He was simply "a Son in His own house"; now He was "a Son over His own house" ([Heb 3:6](#)), the proper Representative, and in flesh "the Heir," of his Father's rights.

**house of merchandise**—There was nothing wrong in the merchandise; but to bring it, for their own and others' convenience, into that most sacred place, was a high-handed profanation which the eye of Jesus could not endure.

**17. eaten me up**—a glorious feature in the predicted character of the suffering Messiah ([Ps 69:9](#)), and rising high even in some not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes. ([Ex 32:19](#), &c.).

**18-22. What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?**—Though the *act* and the *words* of Christ, taken together, were sign enough, they were unconvinced: yet they were *awed*, and though at His very next appearance at Jerusalem they "sought to kill Him" for speaking of "His Father" just as He did now ([Joh 5:18](#)), they, at this early stage, only ask a sign.

**19. Destroy this temple, &c.**—(See on [Mr 14:58, 59](#)).

**20. Forty and six years**—From the eighteenth year of Herod till then was just forty-six years [Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15.11.1].

**21. temple of his body**—in which was enshrined the glory of the eternal Word. (See on [Joh 1:14](#)). By its resurrection the true Temple of God upon earth was reared up, of which the stone one was but a shadow; so that the allusion is not *quite* exclusively to Himself, but takes in that Temple of which He is the foundation, and all believers are the "lively stones." ([1Pe 2:4, 5](#)).

**22. believed the scripture**—on this subject; that is, what was meant, which was hid from them till then. Mark (1) *The act by which Christ signalized His first public appearance in the Temple*. Taking "His fan in His hand, He purges His floor," not thoroughly indeed, but enough to *foreshadow His last act* towards that faithless people—to *sweep them out of God's house*. (2) The sign of His authority to do this is the announcement, at this first outset

of His ministry, of that coming death by their hands, and resurrection by His own, which were to pave the way for their judicial ejection.

**23-25. in the feast day**—the foregoing things occurring probably before the feast began.

**many believed**—superficially, struck merely by "the miracles He did." Of these we have no record.

**24. did not commit**—"entrust," or let Himself down familiarly to them, as to His genuine disciples.

**25. knew what was in man**—It is impossible for language more clearly to assert of Christ what in [Jer 17:9, 10](#), and elsewhere, is denied of all mere creatures.

## CHAPTER 3

[Joh 3:1-21](#). Night Interview of Nicodemus with Jesus.

**1, 2. Nicodemus**—In this member of the Sanhedrim sincerity and timidity are seen struggling together.

**2. came to Jesus by night**—One of those superficial "believers" mentioned in [Joh 2:23, 24](#), yet inwardly craving further satisfaction, Nicodemus comes to Jesus in quest of it, but comes "by night" (see [Joh 19:38, 39; 12:42](#)); he avows his conviction that He was

**come from God**—*an expression never applied to a merely human messenger*, and probably meaning more here—but only as "a *teacher*," and in His miracles he sees a proof merely that "God is with Him." Thus, while unable to repress his convictions, he is afraid of committing himself too far.

**3. Except, &c.**—This blunt and curt reply was plainly meant to shake the whole edifice of the man's religion, in order to lay a deeper and more enduring foundation. Nicodemus probably thought he had gone a long way, and expected, perhaps, to be complimented on his candor. Instead of this, he is virtually told that he has raised a question which he is not in a capacity to solve, and that before approaching it, *his spiritual vision required to be rectified by an entire revolution on his inner man*. Had the man been less sincere, this would certainly have repelled him; but with persons in his mixed state of mind—to which Jesus was no stranger ([Joh 2:25](#))—such methods speed better than more honeyed words and gradual approaches.

**a man**—not a *Jew* merely; the necessity is a universal one.

**be born again**—or, as it were, *begin life anew* in relation to God; his manner of thinking, feeling, and acting, with reference to spiritual things, undergoing *a fundamental and permanent revolution*.

**cannot see**—can have no part in (just as one is said to "see life," "see death," &c.).

**the kingdom of God**—whether in its beginnings here ([Lu 16:16](#)), or its consummation hereafter ([Mt 25:34; Eph 5:5](#)).

**4. How, &c.**—The figure of the new birth, if it had been meant only of *Gentile proselytes* to the Jewish religion, would have been intelligible enough to Nicodemus, being quite in keeping with the language of that day; but that *Jews themselves* should need a new birth was to him incomprehensible.

**5. of water and of the Spirit**—A twofold explanation of the "new birth," so startling to Nicodemus. To a Jewish ecclesiastic, so familiar with the symbolical application of water, in every variety of way and form of expression, this language was fitted to show that the thing intended was no other than a *thorough spiritual purification by the operation of the Holy Ghost*. Indeed, element of *water* and operation of *the Spirit* are brought together in a glorious evangelical prediction of Ezekiel ([Eze 36:25-27](#)), which Nicodemus might have been reminded of had such spiritualities not been almost lost in the reigning formalism.

Already had the symbol of water been embodied in an initiatory ordinance, in the baptism of the Jewish expectants of Messiah by the Baptist, not to speak of the baptism of Gentile proselytes before that; and in the Christian Church it was soon to become the great visible door of entrance into "the kingdom of God," *the reality being the sole work of the Holy Ghost* (Tit 3:5).

**6-8. That which is born, &c.**—A great universal proposition; "That which is begotten carries within itself the nature of that which begat it" [Olshausen].

**flesh**—Not the mere material body, but all that comes into the world by birth, *the entire man*; yet not humanity simply, but in its corrupted, depraved condition, *in complete subjection to the law of the fall* (Ro 8:1-9). So that though a man "could enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born," he would be no nearer this "new birth" than before (Job 14:4; Ps 51:5).

**is spirit**—"partakes of and possesses His spiritual nature."

**7. Marvel not, &c.**—If a spiritual nature only can see and enter the kingdom of God; if all we bring into the world with us be the reverse of spiritual; and if this spirituality be solely of the Holy Ghost, no wonder a new birth is indispensable.

**Ye must**—"Ye, says Jesus, not *we*" [Bengel]. After those universal propositions, about what "*a man*" must be, to "enter the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:5)—this is remarkable, showing that our Lord meant to hold Himself forth as "*separate from sinners.*"

**8. The wind, &c.**—*Breath* and *spirit* (one word both in *Hebrew* and *Greek*) are constantly brought together in Scripture as analogous (Job 27:3; 33:4; Eze 37:9-14).

**canst not tell, &c.**—The laws which govern the motion of the *winds* are even yet but partially discovered; but the risings, failings, and change in direction many times in a day, of those *gentle breezes* here referred to, will probably ever be a mystery to us: So of the operation of the Holy Ghost in the new birth.

**9, 10. How, &c.**—Though the subject still confounds Nicodemus, the necessity and possibility of the new birth is no longer the point with him, but the nature of it and how it is brought about [Luthardt]. "From this moment Nicodemus *says nothing more*, but has sunk unto a disciple who has found his true teacher. *Therefore* the Saviour now graciously advances in His communications of truth, and once more solemnly brings to the mind of this teacher in Israel, now become a learner, his own not guiltless *ignorance*, that He may then proceed to utter, out of the fulness of His divine knowledge, such farther testimonies both of earthly and heavenly things as his docile scholar may to his own profit receive" [Stier].

**10. master**—"teacher." The question clearly implies that *the doctrine of regeneration is so far disclosed in the Old Testament that Nicodemus was culpable in being ignorant of it*. Nor is it merely as something that should be experienced *under the Gospel* that the Old Testament holds it forth—as many distinguished critics allege, denying that there was any

such thing as regeneration before Christ. For our Lord's proposition is universal, that no fallen man is or can be spiritual without a regenerating operation of the Holy Ghost, and the necessity of a *spiritual obedience* under whatever name, in opposition to mere mechanical services, is proclaimed throughout all the Old Testament.

**11-13. We speak that we know, and ... have seen**—that is, by *absolute* knowledge and *immediate* vision of God, which "the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father" claims as exclusively His own ([Joh 1:18](#)). The "we" and "our" are here used, though Himself only is intended, in emphatic contrast, probably, with the opening words of Nicodemus, "Rabbi, we know.", &c.

**ye receive not**, &c.—referring to the *class* to which Nicodemus belonged, but from which he was beginning to be separated in spirit.

**12. earthly things**—such as *regeneration*, the gate of entrance to the kingdom of God *on earth*, and which Nicodemus should have understood better, as a truth even of that more *earthly* economy to which he belonged.

**heavenly things**—the things of the new and more heavenly evangelical economy, only to be fully understood after the effusion of the Spirit from heaven through the exalted Saviour.

**13. no man hath ascended**, &c.—There is something paradoxical in this language—"No one has gone up but He that came down, even He who is at once both up and down." Doubtless it was intended to startle and constrain His auditor to think that there must be mysterious elements in His Person. The old Socinians, to subvert the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, seized upon this passage as teaching that the man Jesus was secretly caught up to heaven to receive His instructions, and then "came down from heaven" to deliver them. But the sense manifestly is this: "The perfect knowledge of God is not obtained by any man's going up from earth to heaven to receive it—no man hath so ascended—but He whose *proper habitation*, in His essential and eternal nature, is heaven, hath, by taking human flesh, descended as the Son of man to disclose the Father, whom He knows by immediate gaze alike in the flesh as before He assumed it, being essentially and unchangeably 'in the bosom of the Father'" ([Joh 1:18](#)).

**14-16. And as Moses**, &c.—Here now we have the "heavenly things," as before the "earthly," but under a veil, for the reason mentioned in [Joh 3:12](#). The crucifixion of Messiah is twice after this veiled under the same lively term—"uplifting," [Joh 8:28](#); [12:32](#), [33](#). Here it is still further veiled—though to us who know what it means, rendered vastly more instructive—by reference to the brazen serpent. The venom of the fiery serpents, shooting through the veins of the rebellious Israelites, was spreading death through the camp—lively emblem of the perishing condition of men by reason of sin. In both cases the remedy was divinely provided. In both the way of cure strikingly resembled that of the disease. Stung by serpents, by a serpent they are healed. By "fiery serpents" bitten—serpents, probably, with skin spotted fiery red [Kurtz]—the instrument of cure is a serpent of brass or copper, having at a distance

*the same appearance.* So in redemption, as by man came death, by Man also comes life—Man, too, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Ro 8:3), differing in nothing *outward* and *apparent* from those who, pervaded by the poison of the serpent, were ready to perish. But as the uplifted serpent had none of the venom of which the serpent-bitten people were dying, so while the whole human family were perishing of the deadly wound inflicted on it by the old serpent, "the Second Man," who arose over humanity with healing in His wings, was without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. In both cases the remedy is *conspicuously displayed*; in the one case on a pole, in the other on the cross, to "draw all men unto Him" (Joh 12:32). In both cases it is by *directing the eye to the uplifted Remedy* that the cure is effected; in the one case the bodily eye, in the other the gaze of the soul by "believing in Him," as in that glorious ancient proclamation—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," &c. (Isa 45:22). Both methods are stumbling to human reason. What, to any thinking Israelite, could seem more unlikely than that a deadly poison should be dried up in his body by simply looking on a reptile of brass? Such a stumbling-block to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness was faith in the crucified Nazarene as a way of deliverance from eternal perdition. Yet was the warrant in both cases to expect a cure equally rational and well grounded. As the serpent was *God's ordinance* for the cure of every bitten Israelite, so is Christ for the salvation of every perishing sinner—the one however a purely *arbitrary* ordinance, the other divinely *adapted* to man's complicated maladies. In both cases the efficacy is the same. As one simple look at the serpent, however distant and however weak, brought an instantaneous cure, even so, real faith in the Lord Jesus, however tremulous, however distant—be it but *real* faith—brings certain and instant healing to the perishing soul. In a word, the consequences of disobedience are the same in both. Doubtless many bitten Israelites, galling as their case was, would *reason* rather than *obey*, would *speculate* on the absurdity of expecting the bite of a living serpent to be cured by looking at a piece of dead metal in the shape of one—speculate thus *till they died*. Alas! is not salvation by a crucified Redeemer subjected to like treatment? Has the offense of the cross" yet ceased? (Compare 2Ki 5:12).

**16. For God so loved, &c.**—What proclamation of the Gospel has been so oft on the lips of missionaries and preachers in every age since it was first uttered? What has sent such thrilling sensations through millions of mankind? What has been honored to bring such multitudes to the feet of Christ? What to kindle in the cold and selfish breasts of mortals the fires of self-sacrificing love to mankind, as these words of transparent simplicity, yet overpowering majesty? The picture embraces several distinct compartments: "The World"—in its widest sense—*ready "to perish"*; the immense "Love of God" *to that perishing world*, measurable only, and conceivable only, by the gift which it drew forth from Him; THE Gift itself—"He *so* loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son," or, in the language of Paul, "*spared not* His own Son" (Ro 8:32), or in that addressed to Abraham when ready to offer Isaac on the altar, "*withheld not* His Son, His only Son, whom He loved" (Ge 22:16);

the Fruit of this stupendous gift—not only *deliverance from* impending "perdition," but *the bestowal of everlasting life*; the MODE in which all takes effect—by "believing" on the Son. How would Nicodemus' narrow Judaism become invisible in the blaze of this Sun of righteousness seen rising on "the world" with healing in His wings! ([Mal 4:2](#)).

**17-21. not to condemn, &c.**—A statement of vast importance. Though "condemnation" is to many the *issue* of Christ's mission ([Joh 3:19](#)), it is not the *object* of His mission, which is purely a *saving* one.

**18. is not condemned**—Having, immediately on his believing, "passed from death unto life" ([Joh 5:24](#)).

**condemned already**—Rejecting the one way of deliverance from that "condemnation" which God gave His Son to *remove*, and so wilfully *remaining* condemned.

**19. this is the condemnation, &c.**—emphatically so, *revealing* the condemnation already existing, and *sealing up* under it those who will not be delivered from it.

**light is come into the world**—in the Person of Him to whom Nicodemus was listening.

**loved darkness, &c.**—This can only be known by the deliberate rejection of Christ, but that *does* fearfully reveal it.

**20. reproved**—by detection.

**21. doeth truth**—whose only object in life is to be and do what will bear the light. Therefore he loves and "comes to the light," that all he is and does, being thus thoroughly tested, may be seen to have nothing in it but what is divinely wrought and divinely approved. This is the "Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile."

[Joh 3:22-36](#). Jesus in the Neighborhood of the Baptist—His Noble Testimony to His Master.

**22-24. land of Judea**—the rural parts of that province, the foregoing conversation being held in the capital.

**baptized**—in the sense explained in [Joh 4:2](#).

**23. Ænon ... Salim**—on the west of Jordan. (Compare [Joh 3:26](#) with [Joh 1:28](#)).

**24. John not yet cast into prison**—Hence it is plain that our Lord's ministry did not *commence* with the imprisonment of John, though, but for this, we should have drawn that inference from [Mt 4:12](#) and Mark's ([Mr 1:14](#)) express statement.

**25, 26. between some of**—rather, "on the part of."

**and the Jews**—rather (according to the best manuscripts), "and a Jew,"

**about purifying**—that is, baptizing, the symbolical meaning of washing with water being put (as in [Joh 2:6](#)) for the act itself. As John and Jesus were the only teachers who baptized Jews, discussions might easily arise between the Baptist's disciples and such Jews as declined to submit to that rite.

**26. Rabbi, &c.**—"Master, this man tells us that He to whom thou barest such generous witness beyond Jordan is requiting thy generosity by drawing all the people away to Himself.

At this rate, thou shalt soon have no disciples at all." The reply to this is one of the noblest and most affecting utterances that ever came from the lips of man.

**27-30. A man, &c.**—"I do my heaven-prescribed work, and that is enough for me. Would you have me mount into my Master's place? Said I not unto you, I am not the Christ? The Bride is not mine, why should the people stay with me?? Mine it is to point the burdened to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, to tell them there is Balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. And shall I grudge to see them, in obedience to the call, flying as a cloud, and as doves to their windows? Whose is the Bride but the Bridegroom's? Enough for me to be the Bridegroom's *friend*, sent by Him to negotiate the match, privileged to bring together the Saviour and those He is come to seek and to save, and rejoicing with joy unspeakable if I may but 'stand and hear the Bridegroom's voice,' witnessing the blessed espousals. Say ye, then, they go from me to Him? Ye bring me glad tidings of great joy. He must increase, but I must decrease; this, my joy, therefore is fulfilled."

**A man can receive, &c.**—assume nothing, that is, lawfully and with any success; that is, Every man has his work and sphere appointed him from above, Even Christ Himself came under this law ([Heb 5:4](#)).

**31-34. He that, &c.**—Here is the reason why He must increase while all human teachers must decrease. The Master "cometh from above"—descending from *His proper element*, the region of those "heavenly things" which He came to reveal, and so, although mingling with men and things on the earth, is not "of the earth," either in Person or Word. The servants, on the contrary, springing of earth, are of the earth, and their testimony, even though divine in authority, partakes necessarily of their own earthiness. (So strongly did the Baptist feel this contrast that the last clause just repeats the first). It is impossible for a sharper line of distinction to be drawn between Christ and all human teachers, even when divinely commissioned and speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost. And who does not perceive it? The words of prophets and apostles are undeniable and most precious truth; but in the words of Christ we hear a voice as from the excellent Glory, the Eternal Word making Himself heard in our own flesh.

**32. what he hath seen and heard**—(See on [Joh 3:11](#) and [Joh 1:18](#)).

**and no man receiveth, &c.**—John's disciples had said, "All come to Him" ([Joh 3:26](#)). The Baptist here virtually says, Would it were so, but alas! they are next to "none" [Bengel]. They were far readier to receive himself, and obliged him to say, I am not the Christ, and he seems pained at this.

**33. hath set to His seal, &c.**—gives glory to God whose words Christ speaks, not as prophets and apostles by a partial communication of the Spirit to them.

**34. for God giveth not the Spirit by measure**—Here, again, the sharpest conceivable line of distinction is drawn between Christ and all human-inspired teachers: "They have the Spirit in a *limited* degree; but God giveth not [to Him] the Spirit by *measure*." It means the

entire fulness of divine life and divine power. The present tense "*giveth*," very aptly points out the permanent communication of the Spirit by the Father to the Son, so that a constant flow and reflow of living power is to be understood (Compare [Joh 1:15](#)) [Olshausen].

**35, 36. The Father loveth, &c.**—See on [Mt 11:27](#), where we have the "*delivering over* of all things into the hands of the Son," while here we have the deep spring of that august act in the Father's ineffable "*love of the Son*."

**36. hath everlasting life**—already has it. (See on [Joh 3:18](#) and [Joh 5:24](#)).

**shall not see life**—The contrast here is striking: The one has already a life that will endure for ever—the other not only has it not now, but shall never have it—never see it.

**abideth on him**—It was on Him before, and not being *removed* in the only possible way, by "*believing on the Son*," it necessarily *remaineth* on him! *Note*.—How flatly does this contradict the teaching of many in our day, that there neither was, nor is, anything *in God* against sinners which needed to be removed by Christ, but only *in men* against God!

## CHAPTER 4

[Joh 4:1-42](#). Christ and the Woman of Samaria—The Samaritans of Sychar.

**1-4. the Lord knew**—not by report, but in the sense of [Joh 2:25](#), for which reason He is here styled "the Lord."

**2. Jesus baptized not**—John being a servant baptized with his own hand; Christ as the Master, "baptizing with the Holy Ghost," administered the outward symbol only through His disciples.

**3. left Judea**—to avoid persecution, which at that early stage would have marred His work.

**departed into Galilee**—by which time John had been cast into prison ([Mr 1:14](#)).

**4. must needs go through Samaria**—for a geographical reason, no doubt, as it lay straight in his way, but certainly not without a higher design.

**5. cometh ... to**—that is, as far as: for He remained at some distance from it.

**Sychar**—the "Shechem" of the Old Testament, about thirty-four miles from Jerusalem, afterwards called "Neapolis," and now "Nablous."

**6-8. wearied ... sat thus**—that is, "as you might fancy a weary man would"; an instance of the graphic style of St. John [Webster and Wilkinson]. In fact, this is perhaps the most *human* of all the scenes of our Lord's earthly history. We seem to be beside Him, overhearing all that is here recorded, nor could any painting of the scene on canvas, however perfect, do other than lower the conception which this exquisite narrative conveys to the devout and intelligent reader. But with all that is *human*, how much also of the *divine* have we here, both blended in one glorious manifestation of the majesty, grace, pity, patience with which "the Lord" imparts light and life to this unlikeliest of strangers, standing midway between Jews and heathens.

**the sixth hour**—*noonday*, reckoning from six A.M. From [So 1:7](#) we know, as from other sources, that the very flocks "rested at noon." But Jesus, whose maxim was, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day" ([Joh 9:4](#)), seems to have denied Himself that repose, at least on this occasion, probably that He might reach this well when He knew the woman would be there. Once there, however, He accepts ... the grateful ease of a seat on the patriarchal stone. But what music is that which I hear from His lips, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" ([Mt 11:28](#)).

**7. Give me to drink**—for the heat of a noonday sun had parched His lips. But "in the last, that great day of the feast," Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and *drink*" ([Joh 7:37](#)).

**9-12. How is it that thou**—not altogether refusing, yet wondering at so unusual a request from a Jew, as His dress and dialect would at once discover Him to be, to a Samaritan.

**for, &c.**—It is this national antipathy that gives point to the parable of the good Samaritan ([Lu 10:30-37](#)), and the thankfulness of the Samaritan leper ([Lu 17:16, 18](#)).

**10. If thou knewest, &c.**—that is, "In Me thou seest only a petitioner to thee but if thou knewest who that Petitioner is, and the Gift that God is giving to men, thou wouldst have changed places with Him, gladly suing of Him living water—nor shouldst thou have sued in vain" (gently reflecting on her for not immediately meeting His request).

**12. Art thou greater, &c.**—already perceiving in this Stranger a claim to some mysterious greatness.

**our father Jacob**—for when it went well with the Jews, they claimed kindred with them, as being descended from Joseph; but when misfortunes befell the Jews, they disowned all connection with them [Josephus, *Antiquities*, 9.14,3].

**13, 14. thirst again ... never thirst, &c.**—The contrast here is fundamental and all comprehensive. "This water" plainly means "this natural water and *all satisfactions of a like earthly and perishable nature.*" Coming to us *from without*, and reaching only the *superficial* parts of our nature, they are soon spent, and need to be anew supplied as much as if we had never experienced them before, while the deeper wants of our being are not reached by them at all; whereas the "water" that Christ gives—*spiritual life*—is struck out of the very depths of our being, making the soul not a *cistern*, for holding water *poured into it from without*, but a *fountain* (the word had been better so rendered, to distinguish it from the word rendered "well" in [Joh 4:11](#)), springing, gushing, bubbling up and flowing forth *within* us, ever fresh, ever living. *The indwelling of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Christ* is the secret of this life with all its enduring energies and satisfactions, as is expressly said ([Joh 7:37-39](#)). "Never thirsting," then, means simply that such souls have the supplies *at home*.

**into everlasting life**—carrying the thoughts up from the eternal freshness and vitality of these waters to the great ocean in which they have their confluence. "Thither may I arrive!" [Bengel].

**15-18. give me this water, &c.**—This is not obtuseness—that is giving way—it expresses a wondering desire after she scarce knew what from this mysterious Stranger.

**16. call thy husband**—now proceeding to arouse her slumbering conscience by laying bare the guilty life she was leading, and by the minute details which that life furnished, not only bringing her sin vividly up before her, but preparing her to receive in His true character that wonderful Stranger to whom her whole life, in its minutest particulars, evidently lay open.

**19, 20. Sir, I perceive, &c.**—Seeing herself all revealed, does she now break down and ask what hopes there might be for one so guilty? Nay, her convictions have not reached that point yet. She ingeniously shifts the subject from a personal to a public question. It is not, "Alas, what a wicked life am I leading!" but "Lo, what a wonderful prophet I got into conversation with! He will be able to settle that interminable dispute between us and the Jews. Sir, you must know all about such matters—our fathers hold to this mountain here," pointing to *Gerizim* in Samaria, "as the divinely consecrated place of worship, but ye Jews say that

*Jerusalem* is the proper place—which of us is right?" How slowly does the human heart submit to *thorough* humiliation! (Compare the *prodigal*; see on [Lu 15:15](#)). Doubtless our Lord saw through the fetch; but does He say, "That question is not the point just now, but have you been living in the way described, yea or nay? Till this is disposed of I cannot be drawn into theological controversies." The Prince of preachers takes another method: He humors the poor woman, letting her take her own way, allowing her to lead while He follows—but thus only the more effectually gaining His object. He answers her question, pours light into her mind on the *spirituality* of all true worship, as of its glorious Object, and so brings her insensibly to the point at which He could disclose to her wondering mind whom she was all the while speaking to.

**21-24. Woman, &c.**—Here are three weighty pieces of information: (1) The point raised will very soon cease to be of any moment, for a total change of dispensation is about to come over the Church. (2) The Samaritans are wrong, not only as to the *place*, but the whole *grounds* and *nature* of their worship, while in all these respects the truth lies with the Jews. (3) As God is a *Spirit*, so He both *invites* and *demands a spiritual worship*, and already all is in preparation for a *spiritual economy*, more in harmony with the true nature of acceptable service than the ceremonial worship by consecrated *persons, place, and times*, which God for a time has seen meet to keep up till fulness of the time should come.

**neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem**—that is, *exclusively* ([Mal 1:11](#); [1Ti 2:8](#)).

**worship the Father**—She had talked simply of "worship"; our Lord brings up before her the great Object of all acceptable worship—"THE Father."

**22. Ye worship ye know not what**—without any *revealed authority*, and so very much in the dark. In this sense, the Jews *knew what they were about*. But the most glorious thing here is the reason assigned,

**for salvation is of the Jews**—intimating to her that *Salvation* was not a thing left to be reached by any one who might vaguely desire it of a God of mercy, but something that had been *revealed, prepared, deposited with a particular people*, and must be sought *in connection with, and as issuing from them*; and that people, "the Jews."

**23. hour cometh, and now is**—evidently meaning her to understand that this new economy was in some sense being set up while He was talking to her, a sense which would in a few minutes so far appear, when He told her plainly He was *the Christ*.

**25, 26. I know Messiah cometh ... when He is come, &c.**—If we take our Lord's immediate disclosure of Himself, in answer to this, as the proper key to its meaning to *His ear*, we can hardly doubt that the woman was already *all but prepared for even this startling announcement*, which indeed she seems (from [Joh 4:29](#)) to have already begun to suspect by His revealing her to herself. Thus quickly, under so matchless a Teacher, was she brought up from her sunken condition to a frame of mind and heart capable of the noblest revelations.

**tell us all things**—an expectation founded probably on [De 18:15](#).

**26. I that speak ... am he**—He scarce ever said anything like this to His own people, the Jews. He had magnified them to the woman, and yet to themselves He is to the last far more reserved than to her—*proving* rather than plainly *telling* them He was the Christ. But what would not have been *safe* among them was safe enough with her, whose *simplicity* at this stage of the conversation appears from the sequel to have become perfect. What now will the woman say? We listen, the scene has changed, a new party arrives, the disciples have been to Sychar, at some distance, to buy bread, and on their return are astonished at the company their Lord has been holding in their absence.

**27. marvelled that he talked with the woman**—It never probably occurred to them to marvel that He talked with *themselves*; yet in His eye, as the sequel shows, He was quite as nobly employed. How poor, if not false, are many of our most plausible estimates!

**no man said ... What? ... Why?**—awed by the spectacle, and thinking there must be something under it.

**28-30. left her water-pot**—How exquisitely natural! The presence of strangers made her feel that it was time for her to withdraw, and He who knew what was in her heart, and what she was going to the city to do, let her go without exchanging a word with her in the hearing of others. Their interview was too sacred, and the effect on the woman too overpowering (not to speak of His own deep emotion) to allow of its being continued. But this one artless touch—that she "left her water-pot"—speaks volumes. The living water was already beginning to spring up within her; she found that man doth not live by bread nor by water only, and that there was a water of wondrous virtue that raised people above meat and drink, and the vessels that held them, and all human things. In short, she was transported, forgot everything but One, and her heart running over with the tale she had to tell, she hastens home and pours it out.

**29. is not this the Christ**—The *form* of the question (in the *Greek*) is a distant, modest way of only half *insinuating* what it seemed hardly fitting for her to *affirm*; nor does she refer to what He said of Himself, but solely to His disclosure to her of the particulars of her own life.

**30. Then they went out, &c.**—How different from the Jews! and richly was their openness to conviction rewarded.

**31-38. meantime**—that is, while the woman was away.

**Master, eat**—*Fatigue* and *thirst* we saw He felt; here is revealed another of our common infirmities to which the Lord was subject—*hunger*.

**32. meat ye know not of**—What spirituality of mind! "I *have* been eating all the while, and such food as ye dream not of." What can that be? they ask each other; have any supplies been brought Him in our absence? He knows what they are saying though He hears it not.

**34. My meat is, &c.**—"A Servant here to fulfil a prescribed work, to *do* and to *finish*, that is 'meat' to Me; and of this, while you were away, I have had My fill." And of what does

He speak thus? Of the condescension, pity, patience, wisdom He had been laying out upon *one soul*—a very humble woman, and in some respects repulsive too! But He had gained her, and through her was going to gain more, and lay perhaps the foundations of a great work in the country of Samaria; and this filled His whole soul and raised Him above the sense of natural hunger ([Mt 4:4](#)).

**35. yet four months, and then harvest**—that is, "In current speech, ye say thus at this season; but lift up your eyes and look upon those fields in the light of *another* husbandry, for lo! *in that sense*, they are even now white to harvest, ready for the sickle." The simple beauty of this language is only surpassed by the glow of holy emotion in the Redeemer's own soul which it expresses. It refers to the *ripeness* of these Sycharites for accession to Him, and the joy of this great Lord of the reapers over the anticipated ingathering. Oh, could we but *so*, "lift up our eyes and look" upon many fields abroad and at home, which to dull sense appear unpromising, as *He* beheld those of Samaria, what movements, as yet scarce in embryo, and accessions to Christ, as yet seemingly far distant, might we not discern as quite near at hand, and thus, amidst difficulties and discouragements too much for nature to sustain, be cheered—*as our Lord Himself was* in circumstances far more overwhelming—with "songs in the night!"

**36. he that reapeth, &c.**—As our Lord could not mean that the reaper only, and not the sower, received "wages," in the sense of *personal reward* for his work, the "wages" here can be no other than the joy of having such a harvest to gather in—the joy of "gathering fruit unto life eternal."

**rejoice together**—The blessed issue of the whole ingathering is the interest alike of the sower as of the reaper; it is no more the fruit of the last operation than of the first; and just as there can be no reaping without previous sowing, so have those servants of Christ, to whom is assigned the pleasant task of merely reaping the spiritual harvest, no work to do, and no joy to taste, that has not been prepared to their hand by the toilsome and often thankless work of their predecessors in the field. *The joy, therefore, of the great harvest festivity will be the common joy of all who have taken any part in the work from the first operation to the last.* (See [De 16:11, 14](#); [Ps 126:6](#); [Isa 9:3](#)). What encouragement is here for those "fishers of men" who "have toiled all the night" of their official life, and, to human appearance, "have taken nothing!"

**38. I sent you, &c.**—The *I* is emphatic—I, the Lord of the whole harvest: "sent you," points to their *past* appointment to the apostleship, though it has reference only to their *future* discharge of it, for they had nothing to do with the present ingathering of the Sycharites.

**ye bestowed no labour**—meaning that much of their future success would arise from the *preparation already made* for them. (See on [Joh 4:42](#)).

**others laboured**—Referring to the Old Testament laborers, the Baptist, and *by implication* Himself, though He studiously keeps this in the background, *that the line of distinction between Himself and all His servants might not be lost sight of*. "Christ represents Himself as the Husbandman [rather the Lord of the laborers], who has the direction both of the sowing and of the harvest, who commissions *all* the agents—those of the Old Testament as well as of the New—and therefore does not stand on a level with either the sowers or the reapers" [Olshausen].

**39-42. many ... believed, &c.**—The truth of [Joh 4:35](#) begins to appear. These Samaritans were the foundation of the Church afterwards built up there. No miracle appears to have been wrought there (but unparalleled supernatural knowledge displayed): "*we have heard Him ourselves*" ([Joh 4:42](#)) sufficed to raise their faith to a point never attained by the Jews, and hardly as yet by the disciples—that He was "the Saviour of *the world*" [Alford]. "This incident is further remarkable as a rare instance of the Lord's ministry producing *an awakening on a large scale*" [Olshausen].

**40. abode two days**—Two precious days, surely, to the Redeemer Himself! Unsought, He had come to His own, yet His own received Him not: now those who were not His own had come to Him, been won by Him, and invited Him to their town that others might share with them in the benefit of His wonderful ministry. Here, then, would He solace His already wounded spirit and have in this outfield village triumph of His grace, a sublime foretaste of the inbringing of the whole Gentile world into the Church.

[Joh 4:43-54](#). Second Galilean Miracle—Healing of the Courtier's Son.

**43, 44. after two days**—literally, the two days of His stay at Sychar.

**44. For Jesus testified, &c.**—This verse had occasioned much discussion. For it seems strange, if "His own country" here means *Nazareth*, which was in Galilee, that it should be said He came to Galilee *because* in one of its towns He expected no good reception. But all will be simple and natural if we fill up the statement thus: "He went into the region of Galilee, but not, as might have been expected, to that part of it called 'His own country,' Nazareth (see [Mr 6:4](#); [Lu 4:24](#)), *for* He acted on the maxim which He oft repeated, that 'a prophet,'" &c.

**45. received**—welcomed Him.

**having seen ... at the feast**—proud, perhaps, of their Countryman's wonderful works at Jerusalem, and possibly won by this circumstance to regard His claims as at least worthy of respectful investigation. Even this our Lord did not despise, for saving conversion often begins in less than this (so Zaccheus, [Lu 19:3-10](#)).

**for they also went**—that is, it was their practice to go up to the feast.

**46, 47. nobleman**—courtier, king's servant, or one connected with a royal household; such as Chuza ([Lu 8:3](#)), or Manaen ([Ac 13:1](#)).

**heard that Jesus was come out of Judea**—"where he had doubtless seen or heard what things Jesus had done at Jerusalem" ([Joh 4:45](#)), [Bengel].

**come down**—for Capernaum was down on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**48-54. Except ye see signs, &c.**—He *did* believe, both as his coming and his urgent entreaty show; but how imperfectly we shall see; and our Lord would deepen his faith by such a blunt and seemingly rough answer as He made to Nicodemus.

**49. come down ere my child die**—"While we talk, the case is at its crisis, and if Thou come not instantly, all is over." This was faith, but partial, and our Lord would perfect it. The man cannot believe the cure could be wrought without the Physician coming to the patient—the thought of such a thing evidently never occurred to him. But Jesus will in a moment bring him up to this.

**50. Go thy way; thy son liveth**—Both effects instantaneously followed:—"The man believed the word," and the cure, shooting quicker than lightning from Cana to Capernaum, was felt by the dying youth. In token of faith, the father takes his leave of Christ—in the circumstances this evidenced full faith. The servants hasten to convey the joyful tidings to the anxious parents, whose faith now only wants one confirmation. "*When* began he to amend? ... Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him"—the very hour in which was uttered that great word, "Thy son liveth!" So "himself believed and his whole house." He *had* believed before this, first very imperfectly; then with assured confidence of Christ's word; but now with a faith crowned by "sight." And the wave rolled from the head to the members of his household. "To-day is salvation come to this *house*" ([Lu 19:9](#)); and no mean house this!

**second miracle Jesus did**—that is, in Cana; done "after He came out of Judea," as the former before.

## CHAPTER 5

[Joh 5:1-47](#). The Impotent Man Healed—Discourse Occasioned by the Persecution Arising Thereupon.

**1. a feast of the Jews**—*What feast?* No question has more divided the Harmonists of the Gospels, and the duration of our Lord's ministry may be said to hinge on it. For if, as the majority have thought (until of late years) it was a *Passover*, His ministry lasted three and a half years; if not, probably a year less. Those who are dissatisfied with the Passover-view all differ among themselves what other feast it was, and some of the most acute think there are no grounds for deciding. In our judgment the evidence is in favor of its being a *Passover*, but the reasons cannot be stated here.

**2, 3. sheep market**—The supplement should be (as in *Margin*) "sheep [gate]," mentioned in [Ne 3:1, 32](#).

**Bethesda**—that is, "house (place) of mercy," from the cures wrought there.

**five porches**—for shelter to the patients.

**3. impotent**—infirm.

**4. an angel, &c.**—This miracle differed in two points from all other miracles recorded in Scripture: (1) It was not one, but a succession of miracles periodically wrought: (2) As it was only wrought "when the waters were troubled," so only upon one patient at a time, and that the patient "who first stepped in after the troubling of the waters." But this only the more undeniably fixed its miraculous character. We have heard of many waters having a medicinal virtue; but what water was ever known to cure *instantaneously* a single disease? And who ever heard of any water curing all, even the most diverse diseases—"blind, halt, withered"—alike? Above all, who ever heard of such a thing being done "only at a certain season," and most singularly of all, doing it only to the first person who stepped in after the moving of the waters? Any of these peculiarities—much more all taken together—must have proclaimed the supernatural character of the cures wrought. (If the text here be genuine, there can be no doubt of the miracle, as there were multitudes living when this Gospel was published who, from their own knowledge of Jerusalem, could have exposed the falsehood of the Evangelist, if no such cure had been known there. The want of [Joh 5:4](#) and part of [Joh 5:3](#) in some good manuscripts, and the use of some unusual words in the passage, are more easily accounted for than the evidence in their favor if they were not originally in the text. Indeed [Joh 5:7](#) is unintelligible without [Joh 5:4](#). The *internal* evidence brought against it is merely the *unlikelihood* of such a miracle—a principle which will carry us a great deal farther if we allow it to weigh against positive evidence).

**5-9. thirty and eight years**—but not all that time at the pool. This was probably the most pitiable of all the cases, and *therefore selected*.

**6. saw him lie, and knew, &c.**—As He doubtless visited the spot just to perform this cure, so He knows where to find His patient, and the whole previous history of his case ([Joh 2:25](#)).

**Wilt thou be made whole?**—Could anyone doubt that a sick man would like to be made whole, or that the patients came thither, and this man had returned again and again, just in hope of a cure? But our Lord asked the question. (1) To fasten attention upon Himself; (2) By making him detail his case to deepen in him the feeling of entire helplessness; (3) By so singular a question to beget in his desponding heart the hope of a cure. (Compare [Mr 10:51](#)).

**7. Sir, I have no man, &c.**—Instead of *saying* he wished to be cured, he just tells with piteous simplicity how fruitless had been all his efforts to obtain it, and how *helpless* and all but *hopeless* he was. Yet not quite. For here he is at the pool, waiting on. It seemed of no use; nay, only tantalizing,

**while I am coming, another steppeth down before me**—the fruit was snatched from his lips. Yet he will not go away. He may get nothing by staying, he may drop into his grave ere he get into the pool; but by going from the appointed, divine way of healing, he can get nothing. Wait therefore he will, wait he does, and when Christ comes to heal him, lo! he is waiting his turn. *What an attitude for a sinner* at Mercy's gate! The man's hopes seemed low enough ere Christ came to him. He might have said, just before "Jesus passed by that way," "This is no use; I shall never get in; let me die at home." Then all had been lost. But he *held on*, and his perseverance was rewarded with a glorious cure. Probably some rays of hope darted into his heart as he told his tale before those Eyes whose glance measured his whole case. But the word of command consummates his preparation to receive the cure, and instantaneously works it.

**8. Rise, take up thy bed, &c.**—"Immediately" he did so. "He *spake* and it was *done*." The slinging of his portable couch over his shoulders was designed to show the perfection of the cure.

**9. the same day was the sabbath**—Beyond all doubt this was intentional, as in so many other healings, in order that when opposition arose on this account men might be compelled to listen to His claims and His teaching.

**10-16. The Jews**—that is, *those in authority*. (See on [Joh 1:19](#).)

**it is not lawful to carry thy bed**—a glorious testimony to the cure, as *instantaneous* and *complete*, from the lips of the most prejudiced! (And what a contrast does it, as all our Lord's miracles, present to the bungling miracles of the Church of Rome!) In *ordinary* circumstances, the rulers had the law on their side ([Ne 13:15](#); [Jer 17:21](#)). But when the man referred them to "Him that had made him whole" ([Joh 5:11](#)) as his authority, the argument was resistless. Yet they ingeniously parried the thrust, asking him, not who had "made him whole"—that would have condemned themselves and defeated their purpose—but who had bidden him "take up his bed and walk," in other words, who had dared to order a breach of

the sabbath? It is time we were looking after Him—thus hoping to shake the man's faith in his Healer.

**13. he that was healed wist not, &c.**—That some one, with unparalleled generosity, tenderness and power, had done it, the man knew well enough: but as he had never heard of Him before, so he disappeared too quickly for any inquiries.

**conveyed himself away**—slipped out of the crowd that had gathered, to avoid both hasty popularity and precipitate hatred ([Mt 12:14-19](#)).

**14. findeth him in the temple**—saying, perhaps, "I will go into Thy house with burnt offerings, I will pay my vows which my lips have uttered and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble" ([Ps 66:13, 14](#)). Jesus, there Himself for His own ends, "findeth him there"—*not all accidentally*, be assured.

**sin no more, &c.**—a glimpse this of the reckless life he had probably led *before* his thirty-eight years' infirmity had come upon him, and which not improbably had brought on, in the just judgment of God, his chronic complaint. Fearful illustration this of "the severity of God," but glorious manifestation of our Lord's insight into "what was in man."

**15. The man departed, and told, &c.**—little thinking how unwelcome his grateful and eager testimony would be. "The darkness received not the light which was pouring its rays upon it" ([Joh 1:5, 11](#)) [Olshausen].

**16. because he had done these things on the sabbath day**—What to these hypocritical religionists was the doing of the most glorious and beneficent miracles, compared with the atrocity of doing them on the sabbath day! Having given them this handle, on purpose to raise the first public controversy with them, and thus open a fitting opportunity of laying His claims before them, He rises at once to the whole height of them, in a statement which for grandeur and terseness exceeds almost anything that ever afterwards fell from Him, at least to His enemies.

**17, 18. My Father worketh hitherto and I work**—The "I" is emphatic; "The creative and conservative activity of My Father has known no sabbath-cessation from the beginning until now, *and that is the law of My working.*"

**18. God was his Father**—literally, "His own [or peculiar] Father," (as in [Ro 8:32](#)). The addition is their own, but a very proper one.

**making himself equal with God**—rightly gathering this to be His meaning, not from the mere words "My Father," but from His claim of right to act as His Father did in the like high sphere, and by the same law of ceaseless activity in that sphere. And as, instead of instantly disclaiming any such meaning—as He must have done if it was false—He positively sets His seal to it in the following verses, merely explaining how consistent such claim was with the prerogatives of His Father, it is beyond all doubt that we have here an assumption of *peculiar personal Sonship*, or participation in the Father's essential nature.

**19, 20. the Son can do nothing of himself**—that is, *apart from* and *in rivalry of* the Father, as they supposed. The meaning is, "The Son can have no separate *interest* or *action* from the Father."

**for what things, &c.**—On the contrary, "whatever the Father doeth that same doeth the Son,"

**likewise**—"in the like manner." What claim to absolute equality with the Father could exceed this: not only to do "the same things," but to do them *as the Father does them?*

**20. Father loveth ... and showeth him all, &c.**—As love has no concealments, so it results from the perfect fellowship and mutual endearment of the Father and the Son (see on [Joh 1:1](#); [Joh 1:18](#)), whose interests are one, even as their nature, that the Father communicates to the Son all His counsels, and what has been thus shown to the Son is by Him executed in His mediatorial character. "With the Father, *doing is willing*; it is only the Son who *acts in Time*" [Alford]. Three things here are clear: (1) The *personal distinctions* in the Godhead. (2) Unity of *action* among the Persons results from unity of *nature*. (3) Their oneness of interest is no unconscious or involuntary thing, but a thing of glorious *consciousness, will, and love*, of which the Persons themselves are the proper Objects.

**show him greater things, &c.**—referring to what He goes on to mention ([Joh 5:21-31](#)), comprised in two great words, Life and Judgment, which Stier beautifully calls God's *Regalia*. Yet these, Christ says, the Father and He do in common.

**21-23. raiseth the dead and quickeneth them**—one act in two stages. This is His absolute prerogative as God.

**so the Son quickeneth them**—that is, raiseth up and quickeneth.

**whom he will**—not only *doing the same divine act*, but doing it *as the result of His own will*, even as the Father does it. This statement is of immense importance in relation to the miracles of Christ, distinguishing them from similar miracles of prophets and apostles, who as *human instruments* were employed to perform super-natural actions, while Christ did all as the Father's *commissioned Servant* indeed, but *in the exercise of His own absolute right of action*.

**22. For the Father judgeth no man, &c.**—rather, "For neither doth the Father judge any man," implying that the same "thing was meant in the former verse of the quickening of the dead"—both acts being done, not by the Father *and* the Son, as though twice done, but by the Father *through* the Son as His voluntary Agent.

**all judgment**—judgment in its most comprehensive sense, or as we should say, all *administration*.

**23. honour the Son as ... the Father**—As he who believes that Christ in the foregoing verses has given a true account of His relation to the Father must of necessity hold Him entitled to the same *honor* as the Father, so He here adds that it was the Father's express intention in making over all judgment to the Son, that men *should* thus honor Him.

**honoureth not the Father**—does not do it in fact, whatever he may imagine, and will be held as not doing it by the Father Himself, who will accept no homage which is not accorded to His own Son.

**24. believeth on him that sent me**—that is, believeth in Him as having sent Me. I have spoken of the Son's right not only to heal the sick but to raise from the dead, and quicken whom He will: And now I say unto you, *That life-giving operation has already passed upon all who receive My words as the Sent of the Father* on the great errand of mercy.

**hath everlasting life**—immediately on his believing (compare [Joh 3:18](#); [1Jo 5:12, 13](#)).  
**is passed**—"hath passed over"

**from death unto life**—What a transition! (Compare [1Jo 3:14](#)).

**25-29. The hour cometh**—in its whole fulness, at Pentecost.

**and now is**—in its beginnings.

**the dead**—the *spiritually* dead, as is clear from [Joh 5:28](#). Here He rises from the calmer phrase "hearing *his word*" ([Joh 5:24](#)), to the grander expression, "hearing *the voice of the Son of God*," to signify that as it finds men in a *dead* condition, so it carries with it a *resurrection-power*.

**shall live**—in the sense of [Joh 5:24](#).

**26. given to the Son, &c.**—Does this refer to the essential life of the Son before all time ([Joh 1:4](#)) (as most of the Fathers, and Olshausen, Stier, Alford, &c., among the moderns), or to the purpose of God that this essential life should reside in the Person of the Incarnate Son, and be manifested thus to the world? [Calvin, Lucke, Luthardt, &c.] The question is as difficult as the subject is high. But as all that Christ says of His *essential* relation to the Father is intended to explain and exalt His *mediatorial* functions, so the one seems in our Lord's own mind and language mainly the starting-point of the other.

**27. because he is the Son of man**—This seems to confirm the last remark, that what Christ had properly in view was the indwelling of the Son's essential life in *humanity* as the great *theater* and *medium* of divine display, in both the great departments of His work—*life-giving and judgment*. The appointment of a Judge in our *own nature* is one of the most beautiful arrangements of divine wisdom in redemption.

**28. Marvel not at this**—this committal of all judgment to *the Son of man*.

**for the hour is coming**—He adds not in this case (as in [Joh 5:25](#)), "and now is," because this was not to be till the close of the whole dispensation of mercy.

**29. resurrection of life**—that is, to life everlasting ([Mt 25:46](#)).

**of damnation**—It would have been harsh to say "the resurrection of death," though that is meant, for sinners rise *from death to death* [Bengel]. The resurrection of both classes is an exercise of *sovereign authority*; but in the one case it is an act of *grace*, in the other of *justice*. (Compare [Da 12:2](#), from which the language is taken). How awfully grand are these

unfoldings of His dignity and authority from the mouth of Christ Himself! And they are all in the *third person*; in what follows He resumes the *first person*.

**30-32. of mine own self do nothing**—that is, apart from the Father, or in any interest than My own. (See on [Joh 5:19](#)).

**as I hear**—that is, "My judgments are all *anticipated* in the bosom of My Father, to which I have immediate access, and by Me only *responded to* and *reflected*. They cannot therefore err, as I live for one end only, to carry into effect the will of Him that sent Me."

**31. If I ... witness of myself**—standing alone, and setting up any separate interest.

**32. There is another**—that is, *the Father*, as is plain from the connection. How brightly the distinction of the Persons shines out here!

**and I know that the witness, &c.**—"This is the Son's testimony to the Father's truth (see [Joh 7:28](#); [8:26](#), [55](#)). It testifies to the full consciousness on the part of the Son, even in the days of His humiliation, of the righteousness of the Father" [Alford]. And thus He cheered His spirit under the cloud of human opposition which was already gathering over His head.

**33-35. Ye sent unto John**—(See [Joh 1:19](#), &c.).

**receive not testimony ... from man**—that is, depend not on human testimony.

**but ... that ye might be saved**—"I refer to him merely to aid your salvation."

**35. He was a burning and a shining light**—literally, "*the burning and shining lamp*" (or torch):—that is, "the great light of his day." Christ is never called by the humble word here applied to John—a *light-bearer*—studiously used to distinguish him from his Master, but ever *the Light* in the most absolute sense. (See on [Joh 1:6](#)).

**willing for a season**—that is, till they saw that it pointed whither they were not prepared to go.

**to rejoice in his light**—There is a play of irony here, referring to the hollow delight with which his testimony tickled them.

**36-38. I have greater witness**—rather, "The witness which I have is greater."

**the works ... bear witness of me**—not simply as *miracles* nor even as a miracle of *mercy*, but these miracles, *as He did them*, with a *will* and a *power*, a *majesty* and a *grace* manifestly *His own*.

**37. the Father himself ... hath borne witness of me**—not referring, probably, to the voice of His baptism, but (as seems from what follows) to the testimony of the Old Testament Scripture [Calvin, Lucke, Meyer, Luthardt, &c.].

**neither heard his voice, &c.**—never recognized Him in this character. The words are "designedly mysterious, like many others which our Lord uttered" [Stier].

**38. not his word abiding in you**—passing now from the *Witness* to the *testimony* borne by Him in "the lively oracles" ([Ac 7:38](#)): both were alike strangers to their breasts, as was evidenced by their rejecting Him to whom all that witness was borne.

**39-42. Search the scriptures, &c.**—"In the Scriptures ye find your charter of eternal life; go search them then, and you will find that I am the Great Burden of their testimony; yet ye will not come to Me for that life eternal which you profess to find there, and of which they tell you I am the appointed Dispenser." (Compare [Ac 17:11, 12](#)). How touching and gracious are these last words! Observe here (1) The honor which Christ gives to the Scriptures, as a record which all *have a right* and *are bound* to search—the reverse of which the Church of Rome teaches; (2) The opposite extreme is, resting in the mere *Book* without *the living Christ*, to direct the soul to whom is its main use and chiefest glory.

**41. I receive not honour from men**—contrasting His own end with theirs, which was to obtain *human applause*.

**42. not the love of God in you**—which would inspire you with a single desire to know His mind and will, and yield yourselves to it, in spite of prejudice and regardless of consequences.

**43-47. if another shall come, &c.**—How strikingly has this been verified in the history of the Jews! "From the time of the true Christ to our time, sixty-four false Christs have been reckoned by whom they have been deceived" [Bengel].

**44. How can ye believe, &c.**—(See on [Joh 5:40,41](#)). The "*will not*" of [Joh 5:40](#), and "*cannot*" here are just different features of the same awful state of the human heart.

**45. Do not think I will accuse you to the Father**—"My errand hither is not to collect evidence to condemn you at God's bar."

**one that accuseth you, even Moses, &c.**—"Alas! that will be too well done by another, and him the object of all your religious boastings—Moses," here put for "*the Law*," the basis of the Old Testament Scriptures.

**46. he wrote of me**—"an important testimony to the subject of the whole Pentateuch—'of Me'" [Alford].

**47. If ye believe not**—(See [Lu 16:31](#)).

**his writings ... my words**—a remarkable contrast, not *absolutely* exalting Old Testament Scripture above His own words, but pointing to the office of those venerable documents to *prepare* Christ's way, to the necessity universally felt for *documentary* testimony in revealed religion, and perhaps (as Stier adds) to the relation which the comparative "*letter*" of the Old Testament holds to the more flowing "words" of "spirit and life" which characterize the New Testament.

## CHAPTER 6

[Joh 6:1-13](#). Five Thousand Miraculously Fed.

(See on [Mr 6:31-44](#)).

**3. a mountain**—somewhere in that hilly range which skirts the east side of the lake.

**4. passover ... was nigh**—but for the reason mentioned ([Joh 7:1](#)), Jesus kept away from it, remaining in Galilee.

[Joh 6:14-21](#). Jesus Walks on the Sea.

(Also see on [Mr 6:45-56](#)).

**14, 15. that prophet**—(See on [Joh 1:21](#)).

**15. departed ... to a mountain himself alone**—(1) to *rest*, which He came to this "desert place" on purpose to do before the miracle of the loaves, but could not for the multitude that followed Him (see [Mr 6:31](#)); and (2) "to pray" ([Mt 14:23](#); [Mr 6:46](#)). But from His mountain-top He kept watching the ship (see on [Joh 6:18](#)), and doubtless prayed both for them, and with a view to the new manifestation which He was to give them of His glory.

**16, 17. when even was come**—(See on [Mr 6:35](#)).

**entered into a ship**—"constrained" to do so by their Master ([Mt 14:22](#); [Mr 6:45](#)), in order to put an end to the misdirected excitement in His favor ([Joh 6:15](#)), into which the disciples themselves may have been somewhat drawn. The word "constrained" implies reluctance on their part, perhaps from unwillingness to part with their Master and embark at night, leaving Him alone on the mountain.

**went**—rather, "were proceeding."

**toward Capernaum**—Mark says ([Mr 6:45](#)), "unto Bethsaida," meaning "Bethsaida of Galilee" ([Joh 12:21](#)), on the west side of the lake. The place they left was of the same name (see on [Mr 6:32](#)).

**Jesus was not come to them**—They probably lingered in hopes of His still joining them, and so let the darkness come on.

**18, 19. sea arose, &c.**—and they were "now in the midst of it" ([Mt 14:24](#)). Mark adds the graphic and touching particular, "He saw them toiling in rowing" ([Mr 6:48](#)), putting forth all their strength to buffet the waves and bear on against a head wind, but to little effect. He *saw* this from His mountain-top, and through the darkness of the night, for His heart was all with them; yet would He not go to their relief till His own time came.

**19. they see Jesus**—"about the fourth watch of the night" ([Mt 14:25](#); [Mr 6:48](#)), or between three and six in the morning.

**walking on the sea**—What Job ([Job 9:8](#)) celebrates as the distinguishing prerogative of God, "Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and TREADETH UPON THE WAVES OF THE SEA"—What Agur challenges as God's unapproachable prerogative, to "GATHER THE WIND IN His fists, and BIND THE WATERS IN A GARMENT" ([Pr 30:4](#))—lo! this is here done *in flesh*, by "THE Son of man."

**drawing nigh to the ship**—yet as though He "*would have passed by them*," [Mr 6:48](#) (compare [Lu 24:28](#); [Ge 18:3, 5](#); [32:24-26](#)).

**they were afraid**—"cried out for fear" ([Mt 14:26](#)), "supposing it had been a spirit" ([Mr 6:49](#)). He would appear to them at first like a dark moving speck upon the waters; then as a human figure, but—in the dark tempestuous sky, and not dreaming that it could be their Lord—they take it for a spirit. (How often thus we miscall our chiefest mercies—not only thinking them distant when they are near, but thinking the best the worst!)

**20. It is I; be not afraid**—Matthew ([Mt 14:27](#)) and Mark ([Mr 6:50](#)) give before these exhilarating words, that to them well-known one, "Be of good cheer!"

**21. willingly received him into the ship**—their first fears being now converted into wonder and delight.

**and immediately the ship was at the land**—This additional miracle, for as such it is manifestly related, is recorded here alone. Yet all that is meant seems to be that as the storm was suddenly calmed, so the little bark—propelled by the secret power of the Lord of Nature now sailing in it—glided through the now unruffled waters, and while they were wrapt in wonder at what had happened, not heeding their rapid motion, *was found* at port, to their still further surprise.

[Joh 6:22-71](#). Jesus Followed by the Multitudes to Capernaum, Discourses to Them in the Synagogue of the Bread of Life—Effect of This on Two Classes of the Disciples.

**22-24.** These verses are a little involved, from the Evangelist's desire to mention every circumstance, however minute, that might call up the scene as vividly to the reader as it stood before his own view.

**The day following**—the miracle of the loaves, and the stormy night; the day on which they landed at Capernaum.

**the people which stood on the other side of the sea**—not the whole multitude that had been fed, but only such of them as remained over night about the shore, that is, on the *east* side of the lake; for we are supposed to have come, with Jesus and His disciples in the ship, to the *west* side, to Capernaum.

**saw that there was none other boat there**, &c.—The meaning is, the people had observed that there had been only one boat on the east side where they were; namely, the one in which the disciples had crossed at night to the other, the west side, and they had also observed that Jesus had not gone on board that boat, but His disciples had put off without Him:

**23. Howbeit**, &c.—"Howbeit," adds the Evangelist, in a lively parenthesis, "there came other boats from Tiberias" (which lay near the southwest coast of the lake), whose passengers were part of the multitude that had followed Jesus to the east side, and been miraculously fed; these boats were fastened somewhere (says the Evangelist)

**nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks**—thus he refers to the glorious "miracle of the loaves"—and now they were put in

requisition to convey the people back again to the west side. For when "the people saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping [in these boats] and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus."

**25. when they had found him on the other side**—at Capernaum.

**they said, &c.**—astonished at His *being* there, and wondering *how* He could have accomplished it, whether by land or water, and *when* He came; for being quite unaware of His having walked upon the sea and landed with the disciples in the ship, they could not see how, unless He had travelled all night round the head of the lake alone, He could have reached Capernaum, and even then, how He could have arrived before themselves.

**26. Ye seek me, &c.**—Jesus does not put them through their difficulty, says nothing of His treading on the waves of the sea, nor even notices their question, but takes advantage of the favorable moment for pointing out to them how forward, flippant, and superficial were their views, and how low their desires. "Ye seek Me not because ye saw the miracles"—literally, "the *signs*," that is, supernatural tokens of a higher presence, and a divine commission, "but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." From this He proceeds at once to that *other Bread*, just as, with the woman of Samaria, to that *other Water* (Joh 4:9-15). We should have supposed all that follows to have been delivered by the wayside, or wherever they happened first to meet. But from Joh 6:59 we gather that they had probably met about the door of the synagogue—"for that was the day in which they assembled in their synagogues" [Lightfoot]—and that on being asked, at the close of the service, if He had any word of exhortation to the people, He had taken the two breads, the *perishing* and the *living* bread, for the subject of His profound and extraordinary discourse.

**27. which the Son of man**—taking that title of Himself which denoted His incarnate life.

**shall give unto you**—in the sense of Joh 6:51.

**him hath God the Father sealed**—marked out and authenticated for that transcendent office, to impart to the world the bread of an everlasting life, and this in the character of "the Son of *man*."

**28-31. What shall we do ... the works of God**—such works as God will approve. Different answers may be given to such a question, according to the *spirit* which prompts the inquiry. (See Ho 6:6-8; Lu 3:12-14). Here our Lord, knowing whom He had to deal with, shapes His reply accordingly.

**29. This is the work of God**—That lies at the threshold of all acceptable obedience, being not only the prerequisite to it, but the proper spring of it—in that sense, the work of works, emphatically "*the* work of God."

**30. What sign showest thou, &c.**—But how could they ask "a sign," when many of them scarce a day before had witnessed such a "sign" as had never till then been vouchsafed to men; when after witnessing it, they could hardly be restrained from making Him a king;

when they followed Him from the one side of the lake to the other; and when, in the opening words of this very discourse, He had chided them for seeking Him, "not because they *saw the signs*," but for the loaves? The truth seems to be that they were confounded by the *novel claims* which our Lord had just advanced. In proposing to make Him a king, it was for far other purposes than dispensing to the world the bread of an everlasting life; and when He seemed to raise His claims even higher still, by representing it as the grand "work of God," that they should believe *on Himself* as His Sent One, they saw very clearly that He was making a demand upon them beyond anything they were prepared to accord to Him, and beyond all that man had ever before made. Hence their question, "What dost Thou *work*?"

**31. Our fathers did eat manna, &c.**—insinuating the inferiority of Christ's miracle of the loaves to those of Moses: "When Moses claimed the confidence of the fathers, 'he gave them bread from heaven to eat'—not for a few thousands, but for millions, and not once only, but daily throughout their wilderness journey."

**32, 33. Moses gave you not, &c.**—"It was not Moses that gave you the manna, and even it was but from the lower heavens; 'but *My Father* giveth you *the true bread*,' and that '*from heaven*.'"

**33. For the bread of God is he, &c.**—This verse is perhaps best left in its own transparent grandeur—holding up the Bread Itself as *divine, spiritual, and eternal*; its ordained Fountain and essential Substance, "*Him who came down from heaven to give it*" (that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us, [1Jo 1:2](#)); and its designed objects, "*the world*."

**34. Lord, evermore give us this bread**—speaking now with a certain reverence (as at [Joh 6:25](#)), the perpetuity of the manna floating perhaps in their minds, and much like the Samaritan woman, when her eyes were but half opened, "Sir, give Me this water," &c. ([Joh 4:15](#)).

**35. I am the bread of life**—Henceforth the discourse is all *in the first person*, "I," "Me," which occur in one form or other, as Stier reckons, thirty-five times.

**he that cometh to me**—to obtain what the soul craves, and as the only all-sufficient and ordained source of supply.

**hunger ... thirst**—shall have conscious and abiding satisfaction.

**36. But ... ye have seen me, and believe not**—seen Him not in His mere bodily presence, but in all the majesty of His life, His teaching, His works.

**37-40. All that, &c.**—This comprehensive and very grand passage is expressed with a peculiar artistic precision. The opening general statement ([Joh 6:37](#)) consists of two members: (1) "All that the Father Giveth me shall come to me"—that is, "Though ye, as I told you, have no faith in Me, My errand into the world shall in no wise be defeated; for all that the Father giveth Me shall infallibly come to Me." Observe, what is *given* Him by the Father is expressed in the *singular* number and *neuter* gender—literally, "everything"; while those who *come to*

Him are put in the *masculine* gender and *singular* number—"every one." The *whole mass*, so to speak, is gifted by the Father to the Son as a *unity*, which the Son evolves, one by one, in the execution of His trust. So [Joh 17:2](#), "that He should give eternal life to *all that which* Thou hast given Him" [Bengel]. This "*shall*" expresses the glorious *certainty* of it, the Father being pledged to see to it that the gift be no empty mockery. (2) "And him that cometh to me I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT." As the former was the *divine*, this is just the *human* side of the same thing. True, the "coming" ones of the second clause are just the "given" ones of the first. But had our Lord merely said, "*When those* that have been given Me of My Father shall come to Me, I will receive them"—besides being very flat, the impression conveyed would have been quite different, sounding as if there were *no other laws in operation*, in the movement of sinners to Christ, but such as are wholly *divine* and *inscrutable* to us; whereas, though He does speak of it as a sublime certainty which men's *refusals* cannot frustrate, He speaks of that certainty as taking effect only by men's *voluntary advances* to Him and acceptance of Him—"Him that cometh to Me," "whosoever will," throwing the door wide open. Only it is not the simply *willing*, but the actually *coming*, whom He will not cast out; for the word here employed usually denotes *arrival*, as distinguished from the ordinary word, which rather expresses the *act of coming* (see [Joh 8:42](#), *Greek*), [Webster and Wilkinson]. "In no wise" is an emphatic negative, to meet the fears of the timid (as in [Re 21:27](#), to meet the presumption of the hardened). These, then, being the two members of the general opening statement, what follows is meant to take in both,

**38. For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will**—to play an independent part.

**but**—in respect to both the foregoing things, the *divine* and the *human* side of salvation.

**the will of Him that sent Me**—What this twofold will of Him that sent Him is, we are next sublimely told ([Joh 6:39, 40](#)):

**39. And this**—in the *first* place.

**is the will of Him that sent me, that of all**—everything.

**which He hath given Me**—(taking up the identical words of [Joh 6:37](#)).

**I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day**—The meaning is not, of course, that He is charged to keep the objects entrusted to Him *as He received them*, so as they should merely suffer nothing in His hands. For as they were just "perishing" *sinners* of Adam's family, to let "nothing" of such "be lost," but "raise them up at the last day," must involve, *first*, giving His flesh for them ([Joh 6:51](#)), that they "might not perish, but have everlasting life"; and *then*, after "keeping them from falling," raising their sleeping dust in incorruption and glory, and presenting them, body and soul, perfect and entire, wanting nothing, to Him who gave them to Him, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." So much for the *first* will of Him that sent Him, the *divine* side of man's salvation, whose every stage and movement is inscrutable to us, but infallibly certain.

**40. And this**—in the *second* place.

**is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him**—seeing the Son believeth on Him.

**may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day**—This is the *human* side of the same thing as in the foregoing verse, and answering to "*Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out*"; that is, I have it expressly in charge that everyone that so "beholdeth" (so vieweth) the Son as to believe on Him shall have everlasting life; and, that *none* of Him be lost, "I will raise him up at the last day." (See on [Joh 6:54](#)).

**41-46. Jews murmured**—muttered, not in our Lord's hearing, but He knew it ([Joh 6:43](#); [Joh 2:25](#)).

**he said, I am the bread, &c.**—Missing the sense and glory of this, and having no relish for such sublimities, they harp upon the "Bread from heaven." "What can this mean? Do we not know all about Him—where, when, and of whom He was born? And yet He says He came down from heaven!"

**43, 44. Murmur not ... No man**—that is, Be not either startled or stumbled at these sayings; for it needs divine teaching to understand them, divine drawing to submit to them.

**44. can come to me**—in the sense of [Joh 6:35](#).

**except the Father which hath sent me**—that is, the Father *as the Sender of Me* and to *carry out the design of My mission*.

**draw him**—by an *internal* and *efficacious* operation; though by all the means of rational conviction, and in a way altogether consonant to their moral nature ([So 1:4](#); [Jer 31:3](#); [Ho 11:3, 4](#)).

**raise him up, &c.**—(See on [Joh 6:54](#)).

**45. written in the prophets**—in [Isa 54:13](#); [Jer 31:33, 34](#); other similar passages may also have been in view. Our Lord thus falls back upon Scripture authority for this seemingly hard saying.

**all taught of God**—not by *external* revelation merely, but by *internal illumination*, corresponding to the "drawing" of [Joh 6:44](#).

**Every man therefore, &c.**—that is, who hath been thus efficaciously taught of Him.

**cometh unto me**—*with absolute certainty*, yet in the sense above given of "drawing"; that is, "As none can come to Me but as divinely drawn, so none thus drawn shall fail to come."

**46. Not that any man hath seen, &c.**—Lest they should confound that "hearing and learning of the Father," to which believers are admitted by divine *teaching*, with His own immediate access to Him, He here throws in a parenthetical explanation; stating, as explicitly as words could do it, how totally different the two cases were, and that only He who is "from God" hath this naked, immediate access to the Father. (See [Joh 1:18](#)).

**47-51. He that believeth, &c.**—(See on [Joh 3:36](#); [Joh 5:24](#)).

**48. I am the bread of life**—"As he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life, so I am Myself the everlasting *Sustenance* of that life." (Repeated from [Joh 6:35](#)).

**49. Your fathers**—of whom ye spake ([Joh 6:31](#)); not "*ours*," by which He would hint that *He* had a higher descent, of which they dreamt not [Bengel].

**did eat manna ... and are dead**—recurring to their own point about the manna, as one of the noblest of the *ordained* preparatory illustrations of His own office: "Your fathers, ye say, ate manna in the wilderness; and ye say well, for so they did, *but they are dead*—even they whose carcasses fell in the wilderness did eat of that bread; the Bread whereof I speak cometh down from heaven, which the manna never did, that men, eating of it, may *live for ever*."

**51. I am, &c.**—Understand, it is of Myself I now speak as the Bread from heaven; of Me if a man eat he shall live for ever; and "THE Bread which I will give is my Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Here, for the first time in this high discourse, our Lord explicitly introduces His sacrificial *death*—for only rationalists can doubt this not only as that which constitutes Him the Bread of life to men, but as THAT very element IN Him which possesses the life-giving virtue.—"From this time we hear no more (in this discourse) of "Bread"; this figure is dropped, and the reality takes its place" [Stier]. The words "I will give" may be compared with the words of institution at the Supper, "This is My body which is *given* for you" ([Lu 22:19](#)), or in Paul's report of it, "*broken* for you" ([1Co 11:24](#)).

**52. Jews strove among themselves**—arguing the point together.

**How can, &c.**—that is, Give us His flesh to eat? Absurd.

**53-58. Except ye eat the flesh ... and drink the blood ... no life, &c.**—The harshest word He had yet uttered in their ears. They asked how it was *possible* to eat His flesh. He answers, with great solemnity, "It is *indispensable*." Yet even here a thoughtful hearer might find something to temper the harshness. He says they must not only "eat His *flesh*" but "drink His *blood*," which could not but suggest the idea of His *death*—implied in the separation of one's flesh from his blood. And as He had already hinted that it was to be something very different from a *natural* death, saying, "My flesh I will give for the life of the world" ([Joh 6:51](#)), it must have been pretty plain to candid hearers that He meant something above the gross idea which the bare terms expressed. And farther, when He added that they "had no *life* in them unless they thus ate and drank," it was impossible they should think He meant that the *temporal* life they were then living was dependent on their eating and drinking, in this gross sense, His flesh and blood. Yet the whole statement was certainly confounding, and beyond doubt was meant to be so. Our Lord had told them that in spite of all they had "seen" in Him, they "did not believe" ([Joh 6:36](#)). For *their* conviction therefore he does not here lay Himself out; but having the ear not only of them but of the more *candid and thoughtful* in the crowded synagogue, and the miracle of the loaves having led up to the most exalted of all views of His Person and Office, He takes advantage of their very difficulties

and objections to announce, for all time, those most profound truths which are here expressed, regardless of the disgust of the unteachable, and the prejudices even of the most sincere, which His language would seem only designed to deepen. The *truth* really conveyed here is no other than that expressed in [Joh 6:51](#), though in more emphatic terms—that He Himself, in the virtue of His sacrificial death, is the spiritual and eternal life of men; and that unless men voluntarily appropriate to themselves this death, in its sacrificial virtue, so as to become the very life and nourishment of their inner man, they have no spiritual and eternal life at all. Not as if His death were the *only* thing of value, but it is what gives all else in Christ's Incarnate Person, Life, and Office, their whole value *to us sinners*.

**54. Whoso eateth ... hath, &c.**—The former verse said that *unless* they partook of Him they had no life; this adds, that *whoever* does so "hath eternal life."

**and I will raise him up at the last day**—For the *fourth* time this is repeated (see [Joh 6:39, 40, 44](#))—showing most clearly that the "eternal life" which such a man "*hath*" cannot be the same with the *future* resurrection life from which it is carefully distinguished each time, but a life communicated *here below* immediately on believing ([Joh 3:36; 5:24, 25](#)); and giving to *the resurrection of the body* as that which consummates the redemption of *the entire man*, a prominence which in the current theology, it is to be feared, it has seldom had. (See [Ro 8:23; 1Co 15:1-58](#), throughout).

**56. He that eateth ... dwelleth in me and I in him**—As our food becomes incorporated with ourselves, so Christ and those who eat His flesh and drink His blood become spiritually *one life*, though *personally* distinct.

**57. As the living Father hath sent me**—to communicate His own life.

**and I live by the Father**—literally, "because of the Father"; My life and His being one, but Mine that of a *Son*, whose it is to be "*of* the Father." (See [Joh 1:18; 5:26](#)).

**he that eateth me, ... shall live by me**—literally, "because of Me." So that though *one spiritual life* with Him, "the Head of every man is Christ, as the head of Christ is God" ([1Co 11:3; 3:23](#)).

**58. This is that bread, &c.**—a sort of summing up of the whole discourse, on which let this one further remark suffice—that as our Lord, instead of softening down His figurative sublimities, or even putting them in naked phraseology, leaves the great truths of His Person and Office, and our participation of Him and it, enshrined for all time in those glorious forms of speech, so when we attempt to strip the truth of these figures, figures though they be, it goes away from us, like water when the vessel is broken, and our wisdom lies in raising our own spirit, and attuning our own ear, to our Lord's chosen modes of expression. (It should be added that although this discourse has nothing to do with the Sacrament of the Supper, the Sacrament has everything to do with it, as *the visible embodiment* of these figures, and, to the believing partaker, a *real*, yea, and the most lively and affecting participation of His flesh and blood, and nourishment thereby of the spiritual and eternal life, here below).

**59. These things said he in the synagogue**—which seems to imply that what follows took place after the congregation had broken up.

**60-65. Many ... of his disciples**—His pretty constant followers, though an outer circle of them.

**hard saying**—not merely harsh, but insufferable, as the word often means in the Old Testament.

**who can hear**—submit to listen to it.

**61, 62. Doth this offend ... What and if, &c.**—that is, "If ye are stumbled at what I have said, how will ye bear what I *now* say?" Not that His ascension itself would stumble them more than His death, but that after recoiling from the *mention* of the one, they would not be in a state of mind to take in the other.

**63. the flesh profiteth nothing**—Much of His discourse was *about* "flesh"; but flesh as such, mere flesh, could profit nothing, much less impart that *life* which the Holy Spirit alone communicates to the soul.

**the words that I speak ... are spirit and ... life**—The whole burden of the discourse is "*spirit*," not mere flesh, and "*life*" in its highest, not its lowest sense, and the words I have employed are to be interpreted solely in that sense.

**64. But there are some, &c.**—that is, "But it matters little to some of you in what sense I speak, for ye believe not." This was said, adds the Evangelist, not merely of the outer but of the inner circle of His disciples; for He knew the traitor, though it was not yet time to expose him.

**65. Therefore said I, &c.**—that is, "That was why I spoke to you of the necessity of divine teaching which some of you are strangers to."

**except it were given him**—plainly showing that by the Father's "drawing" ([Joh 6:44](#)) was meant an *internal* and *efficacious* operation, for in recalling the statement here He says, it must be "*given* to a man to come" to Christ.

**66-71. From that time, &c.**—or, in consequence of this. Those last words of our Lord seemed to have given them the finishing stroke—they could not stand it any longer.

**walked no more**—Many a journey, it may be, they had taken with Him, but now they gave Him up finally!

**67. the twelve**—the first time they are thus mentioned in this Gospel.

**Will ye also go away?**—Affecting appeal! Evidently Christ *felt* the desertion of Him even by those miserable men who could not abide His statements; and seeing a disturbance even of the *wheat* by the violence of the wind which blew away the *chaff* (not yet visibly showing itself, but open to His eyes of fire), He would *nip it in the bud* by this home question.

**68. Then Simon Peter**—whose forwardness in this case was noble, and to the wounded spirit of His Lord doubtless very grateful.

**Lord, to whom, &c.**—that is, "We cannot deny that *we* have been staggered as well as they, and seeing so many go away who, as we thought, might have been retained by teaching a little less hard to take in, our own endurance has been severely tried, nor have we been able to stop short of the question, Shall *we* follow the rest, and give it up? But when it came to this, our light returned, and our hearts were reassured. For as soon as we thought of going away, there arose upon us that awful question, 'To whom shall we go?' To the lifeless formalism and wretched traditions of the elders? to the gods many and lords many of the heathen around us? or to blank unbelief? Nay, Lord, we are shut up. *They* have none of that 'ETERNAL LIFE' to offer us whereof Thou hast been discoursing, in words rich and ravishing as well as in words staggering to human wisdom. That life we cannot want; that life we have learnt to crave as a necessity of the deeper nature which Thou hast awakened: '*the words of that eternal life*' (the authority to *reveal* it and the power to confer it). Thou hast: Therefore will we stay with Thee—we *must*."

**69. And we believe,**—(See on [Mt 16:16](#)). Peter seems to have added this not merely—probably not so much—as an assurance *to his Lord* of his heart's belief in Him, as for the purpose of fortifying *himself* and his faithful brethren against that *recoil* from his Lord's harsh statements which he was probably struggling against with difficulty at that moment. *Note.*—There are seasons when one's faith is tried to the utmost, particularly by speculative difficulties; the spiritual eye then swims, and all truth seems ready to depart from us. At such seasons, a clear perception that to abandon the faith of Christ is *to face black desolation, ruin and death*; and on recoiling from this, to be able to fall back, not merely on *first principles and immovable foundations*, but on *personal experience of a Living Lord in whom all truth is wrapt up and made flesh for our very benefit*—this is a relief unspeakable. Under that blessed Wing taking shelter, until we are again fit to grapple with the questions that have staggered us, we at length either find our way through them, or attain to a calm satisfaction in the discovery that they lie beyond the limits of present apprehension.

**70. Have not I chosen ... and one of you is a devil:**—"Well said, Simon-Barjonas, but that 'we' embraces not so wide a circle as in the simplicity of thine heart thou thinkest; for though I have chosen you but twelve, one even of these is a 'devil'" (the temple, the tool of that wicked one).

## CHAPTER 7

[Joh 7:1-53](#). Christ at the Feast of Tabernacles.

**1, 2. After these things**—that is, *all that is recorded after [Joh 5:18](#)*.

**walked in Galilee**—continuing His labors there, instead of going to Judea, as might have been expected.

**sought to kill him**—referring back to [Joh 5:18](#). *Hence it appears that our Lord did not attend the Passover mentioned in [Joh 6:4](#)—being the third since His ministry began, if the feast mentioned in [Joh 5:1](#) was a Passover.*

**2. feast of tabernacles ... at hand**—This was the last of the three annual festivals, celebrated on the fifteenth of the seventh month (September). (See [Le 23:33](#), &c.; [De 16:13](#), &c.; [Ne 8:14-18](#)).

**3-5. His brethren said**—(See on [Mt 13:54-56](#)).

**Depart ... into Judea, &c.**—In [Joh 7:5](#) this speech is ascribed to their *unbelief*. But as they were in the "upper room" among the one hundred and twenty disciples who waited for the descent of the Spirit after the Lord's ascension ([Ac 1:14](#)), they seem to have had their prejudices removed, perhaps after His resurrection. Indeed here their language is more that of strong prejudice and suspicion (*such as near relatives, even the best, too frequently show in such cases*), than from unbelief. There was also, probably, a tincture of *vanity* in it. "Thou hast many disciples in Judea; here in Galilee they are fast dropping off; it is not like one who advances the claims Thou dost to linger so long here, away from the city of our solemnities, where surely 'the kingdom of our father David' is to be set up: 'seeking,' as Thou dost, 'to be known openly,' those miracles of Thine ought not to be confined to this distant corner, but submitted at headquarters to the inspection of 'the world.'" (See [Ps 69:8](#), "I am become a stranger to *my brethren*, an alien unto *my mother's children!*")

**6-10. My time is not yet come**—that is, for showing Himself to the world.

**your time is always ready**—that is "It matters little when we go up, for ye have no great plans in life, and nothing hangs upon your movements. With Me it is otherwise; on every movement of Mine there hangs what ye know not. The world has no quarrel with you, for ye bear no testimony against it, and so draw down upon yourselves none of its wrath; but I am here to lift up My voice against its hypocrisy, and denounce its abominations; therefore it cannot endure Me, and one false step might precipitate its fury on its Victim's head before the time. Away, therefore, to the feast as soon as it suits you; I follow at the fitting moment, but 'My time is not yet full come.'"

**10. then went he ... not openly**—not "in the (caravan) company" [Meyer]. See on [Lu 2:44](#).

**as it were in secret**—rather, "in a manner secretly"; perhaps by some other route, and in a way not to attract notice.

**11-13. Jews**—the rulers.

**sought him**—for no good end.

**Where is He?**—He had not been at Jerusalem for probably *a year and a half*.

**12. much murmuring**—buzzing.

**among the people**—the multitudes; the natural expression of a Jewish writer, indicating without design the crowded state of Jerusalem at this festival [Webster and Wilkinson].

**a good man ... Nay ... deceiveth the people**—the two opposite views of His claims, that they were *honest*, and that they were an *imposture*.

**13. none spake openly of him**—that is, in His favor, "for fear of the [*ruling*] Jews."

**14, 15. about the midst of the feast**—the fourth or fifth day of the eight, during which it lasted.

**went up into the temple and taught**—The word denotes *formal* and *continuous teaching*, as *distinguished* from mere casual sayings. This was probably *the first time* that He did so thus openly in Jerusalem. He had kept back till the feast was half through, to let the stir about Him subside, and entering the city unexpectedly, had begun His "teaching" at the temple, and created a certain awe, before the wrath of the rulers had time to break it.

**15. How knoweth ... letters**—learning ([Ac 26:24](#)).

**having never learned**—at any rabbinical school, as Paul under Gamaliel. These rulers knew well enough that He had not *studied* under any human teacher—an important admission against ancient and modern attempts to trace our Lord's wisdom to human sources [Meyer]. Probably His teaching on this occasion was *expository*, manifesting that unrivalled faculty and depth which in the Sermon on the Mount had excited the astonishment of all.

**16-18. doctrine ... not mine, &c.**—that is, from Myself unauthorized; I am here by commission.

**17. If any man will do his will, &c.**—"is willing," or "wishes to do."

**whether ... of God, or ... of myself**—from above or from beneath; is divine or an imposture of Mine. A principle of immense importance, showing, on the one hand, that *singleness of desire to please God is the grand inlet to light on all questions vitally affecting one's eternal interests*, and on the other, that *the want of his*, whether perceived or not, *is the chief cause of infidelity amidst the light of revealed religion*.

**18. seeketh his own glory**—(See on [Joh 5:41-44](#)).

**19, 20. Did not Moses, &c.**—that is, In opposing Me ye pretend zeal for Moses, but to the spirit and end of that law which he gave ye are total strangers, and in "going about to kill Me" ye are its greatest enemies.

**20. The people answered, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?**—This was said by *the multitude*, who as yet had no bad feeling to Jesus, and were not in the secret of the plot hatching, as our Lord knew, against Him.

**21-24. I have done one work, &c.**—Taking no notice of the popular appeal, as there were those there who knew well enough what He meant, He recalls His cure of the impotent

man, and the murderous rage it had kindled (Joh 5:9, 16, 18). It may seem strange that He should refer to an event a year and a half old, as if but newly done. But their present attempt "to kill Him" brought up the past scene vividly, not only to Him, but without doubt to them, too, if indeed they had ever forgotten it; and by this fearless reference to it, exposing their hypocrisy and dark designs, He gave His position great moral strength.

**22. Moses ... gave unto you circumcision, &c.**—Though servile work was forbidden on the sabbath, the circumcision of males on that day (which certainly was a servile work) was counted no infringement of the Law. How much less ought fault to be found with One who had made a man "every whit whole"—or rather, "a man's entire body whole"—on the sabbath-day? What a testimony to the reality of the miracle, none daring to meet the bold appeal.

**24. Judge not, &c.**—that is, Rise above the *letter* into the *spirit* of the law.

**25-27. some of them of Jerusalem**—the citizens, who, knowing the long-formed purpose of the rulers to put Jesus to death, wondered that they were now letting Him teach openly.

**26. Do the rulers know, &c.**—Have they got some new light in favor of His claims?

**27. Howbeit we know this man, &c.**—This seems to refer to some current opinion that Messiah's origin would be mysterious (not *altogether* wrong), from which they concluded that Jesus could not be He, since they knew all about His family at Nazareth.

**28, 29. cried Jesus**—in a louder tone, and more solemn, witnessing style than usual.

**Ye both, &c.**—that is, "Yes, ye know both Myself and My local parentage, and (yet) I am not come of Myself."

**but he that sent me is true, &c.**—Probably the meaning is, "He that sent Me is the only *real* Sender of any one."

**30-32. sought to take ... none laid hands**—their *impotence* being equal to their *malignity*.

**31. When Christ cometh, will he, &c.**—that is, If this be not the Christ, what can the Christ do, when He does come, which has not been anticipated and eclipsed by this man? This was evidently the language of friendly persons, overborne by their spiteful superiors, but unable to keep quite silent.

**32. heard that the people murmured**—that mutterings to this effect were going about, and thought it high time to stop Him if He was not to be allowed to carry away the people.

**33, 34. Yet a little while, &c.**—that is, "Your desire to be rid of Me will be for you all too soon fulfilled. Yet a little while and we part company—for ever; for I go whither ye cannot come: nor, even when ye at length seek Him whom ye now despise, shall ye be able to find Him"—referring not to any penitential, but to purely selfish cries in their time of desperation.

**35, 36. Whither will he go, &c.**—They cannot comprehend Him, but seem awed by the solemn grandeur of His warning. He takes no notice, however, of their questions.

**37-39. the last day, that great day of the feast**—the eighth ([Le 23:39](#)). It was a sabbath, the last feast day of the year, and distinguished by very remarkable ceremonies. "The generally joyous character of this feast broke out on this day into loud jubilation, particularly at the solemn moment when the priest, as was done on every day of this festival, brought forth, in golden vessels, water from the stream of Siloah, which flowed under the temple-mountain, and solemnly poured it upon the altar. Then the words of [Isa 12:3](#) were sung, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Salvation*, and thus the symbolical reference of this act, intimated in [Joh 7:39](#), was expressed" [Olshausen]. So ecstatic was the joy with which this ceremony was performed—accompanied with sound of trumpets—that it used to be said, "Whoever had not witnessed it had never seen rejoicing at all" [Lightfoot].

**Jesus stood**—On this high occasion, then, He who had already drawn all eyes upon Him by His supernatural power and unrivalled teaching—"Jesus stood," probably in some elevated position.

**and cried**—as if making proclamation in the audience of all the people.

**If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink!**—What an offer! The deepest cravings of the human spirit are here, as in the Old Testament, expressed by the figure of "thirst," and the eternal satisfaction of them by "drinking." To the woman of Samaria He had said almost the same thing, and in the same terms ([Joh 4:13, 14](#)). But what to her was simply affirmed to her as a *fact*, is here turned into a world-wide *proclamation*; and whereas there, the *gift* by Him of the living water is the most prominent idea—in contrast with her hesitation to give Him the perishable water of Jacob's well—here, the prominence is given to *Himself* as the Well spring of all satisfaction. He had in Galilee invited all the WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN of the human family to come under His wing and they should find REST ([Mt 11:28](#)), which is just the same deep want, and the same profound relief of it, under another and equally grateful figure. He had in the synagogue of Capernaum ([Joh 6:36](#)) announced Himself, in every variety of form, as "the Bread of Life," and as both able and authorized to appease the "HUNGER," and quench the "THIRST," of all that apply to Him. There is, and there can be, nothing beyond that here. But what was on all those occasions uttered in private, or addressed to a provincial audience, is here sounded forth in the streets of the great religious metropolis, and in language of surpassing majesty, simplicity, and grace. *It is just Jehovah's ancient proclamation now sounding forth through human flesh*, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no Money!" &c. ([Isa 55:1](#)). In this light we have but two alternatives; either to say with Caiaphas of Him that uttered such words, "He is guilty of death," or falling down before Him to exclaim with Thomas, " My Lord AND MY God!"

**38. as the scripture hath said**—These words belong to what follows, "Out of his belly, as the scripture hath said, shall flow," &c. referring not to any particular passage, but to such as [Isa 58:11](#); [Joe 3:18](#); [Zec 14:8](#); [Eze 47:1-12](#); in most of which the idea is that of waters issuing

from beneath the temple, to which our Lord compares Himself and those who believe in Him.

**out of his belly**—that is, his inner man, his soul, as in [Pr 20:27](#).

**rivers of living water**—(See on [Joh 4:13](#)). It refers primarily to the *copiousness*, but indirectly also to the *diffusiveness*, of this living water to the good of others.

**39. this spake he of the Spirit**—who, by His direct personal agency, opens up this spring of living waters in the human spirit ([Joh 3:6](#)), and by His indwelling in the renewed soul ensures their *unfailing flow*.

**they that believe, &c.**—As the Holy Ghost is, in the redemption of man, entirely *at the service of Christ*, as His Agent, so it is *only in believing connection with Christ* that any one "receives" the Spirit.

**for the Holy Ghost was not yet given**—Beyond all doubt the word "given," or some similar word, is the right supplement. In [Joh 16:7](#) the Holy Ghost is represented not only as the *gift of Christ*, but a gift the communication of which was *dependent upon His own departure to the Father*. Now as Christ was *not yet gone*, so the Holy Ghost *was not yet given*.

**Jesus not yet glorified**—The word "*glorified*" is here used advisedly, to teach the reader not only that the *departure* of Christ to the Father was *indispensable* to the giving of the Spirit, but that this illustrious Gift, direct from the hands of the ascended Saviour, was God's intimation to the world that He whom it had cast out, crucified, and slain, was "His Elect, in whom His soul delighted," and that it was through the smiting of that Rock that the waters of the Spirit—for which the Church was waiting, and with pomp at the feast of tabernacles proclaiming its expectation—had gushed forth upon a thirsty world.

**40-43. Many ... when they heard this ... said, Of a truth, &c.**—The only wonder is they did not all say it. "But their minds were blinded."

**41. Others said, This is the Christ**—(See on [Joh 1:21](#)).

Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

**42. scripture said ... of the seed of David, and out of ... Bethlehem, &c.**—We accept this spontaneous testimony to our David-descended, Bethlehem-born Saviour. Had those who gave it made the inquiry which the case demanded, they would have found that Jesus "came out of Galilee" ([Joh 7:41](#)) and "out of Bethlehem" both, alike in fulfilment of prophecy as in point of fact. ([Mt 2:23; 4:13-16](#)).

**44-49. would have taken him; but, &c.**—(See on [Joh 7:30](#)).

**45. Then came the officers**—"sent to take him" ([Joh 7:32](#)).

**Why ... not brought him?**—already thirsting for their Victim, and thinking it an easy matter to seize and bring Him.

**46. Never man spake like this man**—Noble testimony of unsophisticated men! Doubtless they were strangers to the profound intent of Christ's teaching, but there was that in it which by its mysterious grandeur and transparent purity and grace, held them spell-

bound. No doubt it was of God that they should so feel, that their arm might be paralyzed, as Christ's hour was not yet come; but even in human teaching there has sometimes been felt such a divine power, that men who came to kill them (for example, Rowland Hiss) have confessed to all that they were unmanned.

**47. ye also deceived**—In their own servants this seemed intolerable.

**48. any of the rulers or ... Pharisees believed**—"Many of them" did, including Nicodemus and Joseph, but not one of these had openly "confessed Him" ([Joh 12:42](#)), and this appeal must have stung such of them as heard it to the quick.

**49. But this people**—literally, "multitude," meaning the *ignorant rabble*. (Pity these important distinctions, so marked in the original of this Gospel, should not be also in our version.)

**knoweth not the law**—that is, by school learning, which only subverted it by human traditions.

**are cursed**—a cursed set (a kind of swearing at them, out of mingled rage and scorn).

**50-53. Nicodemus**—reappearing to us after nearly three years' absence from the history, as a member of the council, probably then sitting.

**51. Doth our law, &c.**—a very proper, but all too tame rejoinder, and evidently more from pressure of conscience than any design to pronounce *positively* in the case. "The feebleness of his defense of Jesus has a strong contrast in the fierceness of the rejoinders of the Pharisees" [Webster and Wilkinson].

**52. thou of Galilee**—in this taunt expressing their scorn of the party. Even a word of caution, or the gentlest proposal to inquire before condemning, was with them equivalent to an espousal of the hated One.

**Search ... out of Galilee ... no prophet**—Strange! For had not *Jonah* (of Gath-hepher) and even *Elijah* (of Thisbe) arisen out of Galilee? And there it may be more, of whom we have no record. But rage is blind, and deep prejudice distorts all facts. Yet it looks as if they were afraid of losing Nicodemus, when they take the trouble to reason the point at all. It was just *because* he had "searched," as they advised him, that he went the length even that he did.

**53. every man went unto his own home**—*finding their plot could not at that time be carried into effect*. Is your rage thus impotent, ye chief priests?

## CHAPTER 8

[Joh 8:1-11](#). The Woman Taken in Adultery.

**1, 2. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives**—This should have formed the last verse of the foregoing chapter. "The return of the people to the inert quiet and security of their *dwelling*s ([Joh 7:53](#)), at the close of the feast, is designedly contrasted with our Lord's *homeless* way, so to speak, of spending the short night, who is early in the morning on the scene again. One cannot well see why what is recorded in [Lu 21:37, 38](#) may not even thus early have taken place; it might have been the Lord's ordinary custom from the beginning to leave the brilliant misery of the city every night, that so He might compose His sorrowful and interceding heart, and collect His energies for new labors of love; preferring for His resting-place Bethany, and the *Mount of Olives*, the scene thus consecrated by many preparatory prayers for His final humiliation and exaltation" [Stier].

**3-6. scribes and Pharisees**—foiled in their yesterday's attempt, and hoping to succeed better in this.

**4, 5. woman ... in adultery ... Moses ... commanded ... should be stoned**—simply put to death ([De 22:22](#)), but in aggravated cases, at least in later times, this was probably by stoning ([Eze 16:40](#)).

**but what sayest thou**—hoping, whatever He might answer, to put Him in the wrong:—if He said, Stone her, that would seem a stepping out of His province; if He forbade it, that would hold Him up as a relaxer of the public morals. But these cunning hypocrites were overmatched.

**6. stooped down**—It will be observed He was *sitting* when they came to Him.

**with his finger wrote on the ground**—The words of our translators in italics ("as though He heard them not") have hardly improved the sense, for it is scarcely probable He could wish that to be thought. Rather He wished to show them His aversion to enter on the subject. But as this did not suit them, they "continue asking Him," pressing for an answer. At last, raising Himself He said.

**7. He that is without sin**—not meaning sinless altogether; nor yet, guiltless of a literal breach of the Seventh Commandment; but probably, he whose conscience acquits him of *any such* sin.

**cast a stone**—"the stone," meaning the first one ([De 17:7](#)).

**8. again he stooped down and wrote**—The design of this second stooping and writing on the ground was evidently to give her accusers an opportunity to slink away unobserved *by Him*, and so avoid an exposure to His eye which they could ill have stood. Accordingly it is added.

**9. they ... convicted ... went out one by one ... Jesus was left alone**—that is, without one of her accusers remaining; for it is added.

**the woman in the midst**—that is, of the remaining audience. While the trap failed to catch Him for whom it was laid, it caught those who laid it. Stunned by the unexpected home thrust, they immediately made off—which makes the impudence of those impure hypocrites in dragging such a case before the public eye the more disgusting.

**10. Woman, &c.**—What inimitable tenderness and grace! Conscious of her own guilt, and till now in the hands of men who had talked of stoning her, wondering at the *skill* with which her accusers had been dispersed, and the *grace* of the few words addressed to herself, she would be disposed to listen, with a reverence and teachableness before unknown, to our Lord's admonition. "And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." He pronounces no pardon upon the woman (such as, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" [compare [Lu 5:28](#); [7:48](#)])—"Go in peace" [compare [Mr 5:34](#); [Lu 7:50](#); [8:48](#)]), much less does He say that she had done nothing condemnable; He simply leaves the matter where it was. He meddles not with the magistrate's office, nor acts the *Judge* in any sense ([Joh 12:47](#)). But in saying, "Go and sin no more," which had been before said to one who undoubtedly believed ([Joh 5:14](#)), more is probably implied than expressed. If brought suddenly to conviction of sin, admiration of her Deliverer, and a willingness to be admonished and guided by Him, this call to begin a new life may have carried with it what would ensure and naturally bring about a permanent change. (This whole narrative is wanting in some of the earliest and most valuable manuscripts, and those which have it vary to some extent. The internal evidence in its favor is almost overpowering. It is easy to account for its *omission*, though genuine; but if not so, it is next to impossible to account for its *insertion*).

[Joh 8:12-59](#). Further Discourses of Jesus—Attempt to Stone Him.

**12. I am the light of the world**—As the former references to *water* ([Joh 4:13, 14](#); [7:37-39](#)) and to *bread* ([Joh 6:35](#)) were occasioned by outward occurrences, so this one to *light*. In "the treasury" where it was spoken (see on [Joh 8:20](#)) stood two colossal golden lamp-stands, on which hung a multitude of lamps, lighted after the evening sacrifice (probably every evening during the feast of tabernacles), diffusing their brilliancy, it is said, over all the city. Around these the people danced with great rejoicing. Now, as amidst the festivities of the *water* from Siloam Jesus cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," so now amidst the blaze and the joyousness of this illumination, He proclaims, "I AM THE Light of the world"—plainly in the most *absolute* sense. For though He gives His disciples the same title, they are only "light in the Lord" ([Eph 5:8](#)); and though He calls the Baptist "the burning and shining light" (or "*lamp*" of his day, [Joh 5:35](#)), yet "he was *not that Light*, but was sent to bear witness of that Light: that was THE TRUE Light which, coming into the world, *lighteth every man*" ([Joh 1:8, 9](#)). Under this magnificent title Messiah was promised of old ([Isa 42:6](#); [Mal 4:2](#), &c.).

**he that followeth me**—as one does a light going before him, and as the Israelites did the pillar of bright cloud in the wilderness.

**but shall have the light of life**—the light, as of a new world, a newly awakened spiritual and eternal life.

**13-19. bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true**—How does He meet this specious cavil? Not by disputing the wholesome human maxim that "self-praise is no praise," but by affirming that He was *an exception to the rule*, or rather, that *it had no application to Him*.

**14. for I know whence I came, and whither I go, &c.**—(See on [Joh 7:28](#)).

**15. Ye judge after the flesh**—with no spiritual apprehension.

I judge no man.

**16. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true, &c.**—Ye not only *form* your carnal and warped judgments of Me, but are bent on carrying them into effect; I, though I form and utter My judgment of you, am not here to carry this into execution—that is reserved to a future day; yet the judgment I now pronounce and the witness I now bear is not Mine only as ye suppose, but His also that sent Me. (See on [Joh 5:31, 32](#)). And these are the two witnesses to any fact which your law requires.

**20. These words spake Jesus in the treasury**—a division, so called, of the fore court of the temple, part of the court of the women [Josephus, *Antiquities*, 19.6.2, &c.], which may confirm the genuineness of [Joh 8:2-11](#), as the place where the woman was brought.

**no man laid hands on him, &c.**—(See on [Joh 7:30](#)). In the dialogue that follows, the conflict waxes sharper on both sides, till rising to its climax, they take up stones to stone him.

**21-25. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, &c.**—(See on [Joh 7:33](#)).

**22. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself?**—seeing something more in His words than before ([Joh 7:35](#)), but their question more malignant and scornful.

**23. Ye are from beneath; I am from above**—contrasting Himself, not as in [Joh 3:31](#), simply with *earthborn messengers of God*, but *with men sprung from and breathing an opposite element* from His, which rendered it impossible that He and they should have any present fellowship, or dwell eternally together. (Again see on [Joh 7:33](#); also see on [Joh 8:44](#)).

**24. if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins**—They knew well enough what He meant ([Mr 13:6](#), *Greek*; compare [Mt 24:5](#)). But He would not, by speaking it out, give them the materials for a charge for which they were watching. At the same time, one is irresistibly reminded by such language, so far transcending what is becoming in *men*, of those ancient declarations of the God of Israel, "I AM He" ([De 32:39](#); [Isa 43:10, 13](#); [46:4](#); [48:12](#)). See on [Joh 6:20](#).

**25. Who art thou?**—hoping thus to extort an explicit answer; but they are disappointed.

**26, 27. I have many things to say and to judge of you; but he that sent me is true, &c.**—that is, I could, and at the fitting time, will say and judge many things of you (referring perhaps to the work of the Spirit which is for *judgment* as well as *salvation*, [Joh 16:8](#)), but what I do say is just the message My Father hath given Me to deliver.

**28-30. When ye have lifted up the Son of man**—The plainest intimation He had yet given *in public of the manner and the authors* of His death.

**then shall ye know that I am he**, &c.—that is, *find out*, or have sufficient evidence, how true was all He said, though they would be far from owning it.

**29. the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him**, &c.—that is, To you, who gnash upon Me with your teeth, and frown down all open appearance for Me, I seem to stand uncountenanced and alone; but I have a sympathy and support transcending all human applause; I came hither to do My Father's will, and in the doing of it have not ceased to please Him; therefore is He ever by Me with His approving smile, His cheering words, His supporting arm.

**30. As he spake these words, many believed on him**—Instead of wondering at this, the wonder would be if words of such unearthly, surpassing grandeur *could* be uttered without captivating *some* that heard them. And just as "all that sat in the council" to try Stephen "saw his face"—though expecting nothing but death—"as it had been the face of an angel" ([Ac 6:15](#)), so may we suppose that, full of the sweet supporting sense of His Father's presence, amidst the rage and scorn of the rulers, a divine benignity beamed from His countenance, irradiated the words that fell from Him, and won over the candid "many" of His audience.

**31-33. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed**, &c.—The impression produced by the last words of our Lord may have become visible by some decisive movement, and here He takes advantage of it to press on them "*continuance*" in the faith, since then only were they His real disciples (compare [Joh 15:3-8](#)), and then should they *experimentally* "know the truth," and "by the truth be made (*spiritually*) free."

**33. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man**, &c.—Who said this? Not surely the very class just spoken of as won over by His divine words, and exhorted to continue in them. Most interpreters seem to think so; but it is hard to ascribe such a petulant speech to the newly gained disciples, even in the lowest sense, much less persons *so* gained as they were. It came, probably, from persons mixed up with them in the same part of the crowd, but of a very different spirit. The *pride* of the Jewish nation, even now after centuries of humiliation, is the most striking feature of their character. "Talk of freedom to *us*? Pray when or to whom were we ever in bondage?" This bluster sounds almost ludicrous from such a nation. Had they forgotten their long and bitter bondage in Egypt? their dreary captivity in Babylon? their present bondage to the Roman yoke, and their restless eagerness to throw it off? But probably they saw that our Lord pointed to something else—freedom, perhaps, from the leaders of sects or parties—and were not willing to allow their subjection even to these. Our Lord, therefore, though He knew what slaves they were in this sense, drives the ploughshare somewhat deeper than this, to a bondage they little dreamt of.

**34, 35. Whosoever committeth sin**—that is, *liveth in the commission* of it—(Compare [1Jo 3:8](#); [Mt 7:23](#)).

**is the servant of sin**—that is, the *bond-servant*, or *slave* of it; for the question is not about free service, but who are in *bondage*. (Compare [2Pe 2:19](#); [Re 6:16](#)). The great truth here expressed was not unknown to heathen moralists; but it was applied only to vice, for they were total strangers to what in revealed religion is called *sin*. The thought of *slaves* and *freemen* in the house suggests to our Lord a wider idea.

**35. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever**—that is, "And if your connection with the family of God be that of BOND-SERVANTS, ye have no *natural tie* to the house; your tie is essentially *uncertain and precarious*. But the Son's relationship to the Father is a *natural and essential* one; it is an indefeasible tie; His abode in it is *perpetual* and *of right*: That is My relationship, My tie: If, then, ye would have your connection with God's family made *real, rightful, permanent*, ye must by the Son be *manumitted* and *adopted* as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." In this sublime statement there is no doubt a *subordinate* allusion to [Ge 21:10](#), "*Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac.*" (Compare [Ga 4:22-30](#)).

**37-41. ye seek to kill me**—He had said this to their face before: He now repeats it, and they do not deny it; yet are they held back, as by some marvellous spell—it was the awe which His combined dignity, courage, and benignity struck into them.

**because my word hath no place in you**—When did ever *human prophet* so speak of His words? They tell us of "the word of the Lord" coming to them. But here is One who holds up "His word" as that which ought to find entrance and abiding room for itself in the souls of all who hear it.

**38. my Father ... your father**—(See on [Joh 8:23](#)).

**39. If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham**—He had just said He "knew they were Abraham's children," that is, according to the *flesh*; but the children of his *faith and holiness* they were not, but the reverse.

**40. this did not Abraham**—In so doing ye act in direct opposition to him.

**41. We be not born of fornication ... we have one Father, God**—meaning, as is generally allowed, that they were not an illegitimate race in point of *religion*, pretending only to be God's people, but were descended from His own chosen Abraham.

**42, 43. If God were your Father, ye would love me**—"If ye had anything of His moral image, as children have their father's likeness, ye would love Me, for I am immediately of Him and directly from Him." But "My speech" (meaning His peculiar style of expressing Himself on these subjects) is unintelligible to you because ye cannot take in the truth which it conveys.

**44. Ye are of your father the devil**—"This is one of the most decisive testimonies to the *objective* (outward) *personality* of the devil. It is quite impossible to suppose an accommodation to Jewish views, or a metaphorical form of speech, in so solemn an assertion as this" [Alford].

**the lusts of your father**—his impure, malignant, ungodly propensities, inclinations, desires.

**ye will do**—are willing to do; not of any *blind necessity of nature*, but of *pure natural inclination*.

**He was a murderer from the beginning**—The reference is not to *Cain* (as Locke, De Wette, Alford, &c.), but to *Adam* [Grotius, Calvin, Meyer, Luthardt, &c.]. The death of the human race, in its widest sense, is ascribed to the murderous seducer of our race.

**and abode not in the truth**—As, strictly speaking, the word means "abideth," it has been denied that the *fall* of Satan from a former holy state is here expressed [Locke, &c.], and some superior interpreters think it only *implied* [Olshausen, &c.]. But though the *form* of the thought is present—not past—this is to express the important idea, that his whole character and activity are just *a continual aberration from his own original truth or rectitude*; and thus his fall is not only the *implied basis* of the thought, but *part of the statement itself*, properly interpreted and brought out.

**no truth in him**—void of all that holy, transparent rectitude which, as His creature, he originally possessed.

**When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own**—perhaps his own resources, treasures (Mt 12:35) [Alford]. (The word is *plural*). It means that he has no temptation to it *from without*; it is purely *self-begotten*, springing from a nature which is nothing but obliquity.

**the father of it**—that is, of lying: all the falsehood in the world owes its existence to him. What a verse is this! It holds up the devil (1) as the murderer of the human race; but as this is meant here in the more profound sense of *spiritual* death, it holds him up, (2) as the spiritual parent of this fallen human family, communicating to his offspring his own evil passions and universal obliquity, and stimulating these into active exercise. But as there is "a stronger than he," who comes upon him and overcomes him (Lu 11:21, 22), it is only such as "love the darkness," who are addressed as children of the devil (Mt 13:38; 1Jo 3:8-10).

**45-47. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not**—not *although*, but just *because* He did so, for the reason given in the former verse. Had He been *less* true they would have hailed Him more readily.

**46. Which of you convinceth me of sin**—"Convicteth," bringeth home a charge of sin. Glorious dilemma! "Convict Me of sin, and reject Me: If not, why stand ye out against My claims?" Of course, they could only be supposed to impeach His *life*; but in One who had already passed through unparalleled complications, and had continually to deal with friends

and foes of every sort and degree, such a challenge thrown wide among His bitterest enemies, can amount to nothing short of a claim to *absolute sinlessness*.

**48-51. Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?**—What intense and virulent scorn! (See [Heb 12:3](#)). The "say we not well" refers to [Joh 7:20](#). "A Samaritan" means more than "no Israelite at all"; it means one who *pretended, but had no manner of claim* to the title—retorting perhaps, this denial of their *true* descent from Abraham.

**49. Jesus answered, I have not a devil**—What calm dignity is here! Verily, "when reviled, He reviled not again" ([1Pe 2:23](#)). Compare Paul ([Ac 26:25](#)), "I am not mad," &c. He adds not, "Nor am I a Samaritan," that He might not even seem to partake of their contempt for a race that had already welcomed Him as the Christ, and began to be blessed by Him.

**I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me**—the language of *wounded feeling*. But the *interior* of His soul at such moments is only to be seen in such prophetic utterances as these, "For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face; I am become a *stranger* unto my brethren, an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and *the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me*" ([Ps 69:7-9](#)).

**50. I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh**—that is, evidently, "*that seeketh My glory*"; *requiring* "all men to honor the Son even as they honor the Father"; judicially *treating* him "who honoreth not the Son as honoring not the Father that hath sent Him" ([Joh 5:23](#); and compare [Mt 17:5](#)); but giving to Him ([Joh 6:37](#)) such as will yet cast their crowns before His throne, in whom He "shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied" ([Isa 53:11](#)).

**51. If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death**—Partly thus vindicating His lofty claims as Lord of the kingdom of life everlasting, and, at the same time, holding out even to His revilers the scepter of grace. The word "*keep*" is in harmony with [Joh 8:31](#), "If ye *continue* in My word," expressing the permanency, as a living and paramount principle, of that faith to which He referred: "*never see death*," though virtually uttered before ([Joh 5:24](#); [6:40](#), [47](#), [51](#)), is the strongest and most naked statement of a very glorious truth yet given. (In [Joh 11:26](#) it is repeated in nearly identical terms).

**52, 53. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil, &c.**—"Thou art now self-convicted; only a demoniac could speak so; the most illustrious of our fathers are dead, and Thou promisest exemption from death to anyone who will keep *Thy saying!* pray, who art Thou?"

**54-56. If I honour myself, my honour is nothing, &c.**—(See on [Joh 5:31](#), &c.).

**55. I shall be a liar like unto you**—now rising to the summit of holy, naked severity, thereby to draw this long dialogue to a head.

**56. Abraham rejoiced to see my day, &c.**—exulted, or exceedingly rejoiced that he should see, he exulted to see it, that is, by *anticipation*. Nay,

**he saw it, and was glad**—he *actually* beheld it, to his joy. If this mean no more than that he had a prophetic foresight of the gospel-day—the second clause just repeating the first—how could the Jews understand our Lord to mean that He "had seen Abraham?" And if it mean that Abraham was *then beholding*, in his disembodied spirit, the incarnate Messiah [Stier, Alford, &c.], the words seem very unsuitable to express it. It expresses something *past*—"he saw My day, and was glad," that is, surely *while he lived*. He seems to refer to the familiar intercourse which Abraham had with *God*, who is once and again in the history called "*the Angel of the Lord*," and whom Christ here identifies with Himself. On those occasions, Abraham "saw ME" (Olshausen, though he thinks the reference is to some unrecorded scene). If this be the meaning, all that follows is quite natural.

**57-59. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old**—"No inference can be drawn from this as to the age of our Lord at the time as man. Fifty years was with the Jews the completion of manhood" [Alford].

**and hast thou seen Abraham?**—He had said Abraham saw *Him*, as being his peculiar privilege. They give the opposite turn to it—"Hast Thou seen *Abraham?*" as an honor too great for Him to pretend to.

**58. Before Abraham was, I am**—The words rendered "was" and "am" are quite different. The one clause means, "Abraham was *brought into being*"; the other, "*I exist*." The statement therefore is not that *Christ came into existence before Abraham did* (as Arians affirm is the meaning), but that He never *came* into being at all, but *existed* before Abraham had a being; in other words, existed before *creation*, or *eternally* (as [Joh 1:1](#)). *In that sense the Jews plainly understood Him*, since "then took they up stones to cast at Him," *just as they had before done when they saw that He made Himself equal with God* ([Joh 5:18](#)).

**hid himself**—(See on [Lu 4:30](#)).

## CHAPTER 9

[Joh 9:1-41](#). The Opening of the Eyes of One Born Blind, and What Followed on It.

**1-5. as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from birth**—and who "sat begging" ([Joh 9:8](#)).

**2. who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind**—not in a former state of existence, in which, as respects the wicked, the Jews did not believe; but, perhaps, expressing loosely that sin *somewhere* had surely been the cause of this calamity.

**3. Neither ... this man, &c.**—The cause was neither in himself nor his parents, but, in order to the manifestation of "the works of God," in his cure.

**4. I must work the works of him that sent me, &c.**—a most interesting statement from the mouth of Christ; intimating, (1) that He had a precise work to do upon earth, with every particular of it arranged and laid out to Him; (2) that all He did upon earth was just "the works of God"—particularly "going about *doing good*," though not exclusively by miracles; (3) that each work had its precise *time* and *place* in His programme of instructions, so to speak; hence, (4) that as His period for work had definite termination, so by letting any one service pass by its allotted time, the whole would be disarranged, marred, and driven beyond its destined period for completion; (5) that He acted ever under the impulse of these considerations, as man—"the night cometh when no man (or no one) can work." What lessons are here for others, and what encouragement from such Example!

**5. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world**—not as if He would cease, after that, to be so; but that He must make full proof of His fidelity while His earthly career lasted by displaying His glory. "As before the raising of Lazarus ([Joh 11:25](#)), He announces Himself as *the Resurrection and the Life*, so now He sets Himself forth as the source of the archetypal spiritual light, of which the natural, now about to be conferred, is only a derivation and symbol" [Alford].

**6, 7. he spat on the ground, and made clay ... and he anointed the eyes of the blind man**—These operations were not so incongruous in their nature as might appear, though it were absurd to imagine that they contributed in the least degree to the effect which followed. (See [Mr 6:13](#) and see on [Joh 7:33](#).)

**7. Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, ... Sent, &c.**—(See [2Ki 5:10, 14](#)). As the prescribed action was purely symbolical in its design, so in connection with it the Evangelist notices the symbolical name of the pool as in this case bearing testimony to him who was *sent* to do what it only *symbolized*. (See [Isa 8:6](#), where this same pool is used figuratively to denote "the streams that make glad the city of God," and which, humble though they be, betoken *a present God of Israel*.)

**8-15. The neighbours therefore ... said, Is not this he that sat and begged**—Here are a number of details to identify the newly seeing with the long-known blind beggar.

**13. They brought to the Pharisees**—sitting probably in council, and chiefly of that sect ([Joh 7:47, 48](#)).

**16, 17. This man is not of God, &c.**—(See on [Joh 5:9](#); [Joh 5:16](#)).

**Others said, &c.**—such as Nicodemus and Joseph.

**17. the blind man ... said, He is a prophet**—rightly viewing the miracle as but a "sign" of His prophetic commission.

**18-23. the Jews did not believe ... he had been born blind ... till they called the parents of him that had received his sight**—Foiled by the testimony of the young man himself, they hope to throw doubt on the fact by close questioning his parents, who, perceiving the snare laid for them, ingeniously escape it by testifying simply to the identity of their son, and his birth-blindness, leaving it to himself, as a competent witness, to speak as to the cure. They prevaricated, however, in saying they "knew not who had opened his eyes," for "they feared the Jews," who had come to an understanding (probably after what is recorded, [Joh 7:50](#), &c.; but by this time well known), that whoever owned Him as the Christ would be put out of the synagogue—that is, not simply *excluded*, but *excommunicated*.

**24-34. Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner**—not wishing him to own, even to the praise of God, that a miracle had been wrought upon him, but to show more regard to the honor of God than ascribe any such act to one who was a sinner.

**25. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, &c.**—Not that the man meant to insinuate any doubt in his own mind on the point of His being "a sinner," but as his *opinion* on such a point would be of no consequence to others, he would speak only to what he *knew as fact* in his *own case*.

**26. Then said they ... again, What did he to thee? &c.**—hoping by repeated questions to ensnare him, but the youth is more than a match for them.

**27. I have told you already ... will ye also be his disciples?**—In a vein of keen irony he treats their questions as those of anxious inquirers, almost ready for discipleship! Stung by this, they retort upon *him* as the disciple (and here they plainly were not wrong); for themselves, they fall back upon Moses; about *him* there could be no doubt; but who knew about this upstart?

**30. The man answered, Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes**—He had no need to say another word; but waxing bolder in defense of his Benefactor, and his views brightening by the very courage which it demanded, he puts it to them how they could pretend inability to tell whether one who opened the eyes of a man born blind was "of God" or "a sinner"—from above or from beneath—and proceeds to argue the case with remarkable power. So irresistible was his argument that their rage burst forth in a speech of intense Pharisaism, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?"—*thou*, a base-born, uneducated, impudent youth,

teach *us*, the trained, constituted, recognized guides of the people in the things of God! Out upon thee!

**31. they cast him out**—judicially, no doubt, as well in fact. The allusion to his being "born in sins" seems a tacit admission of his being blind from birth—the very thing they had been so unwilling to own. But rage and enmity to truth are seldom consistent in their outbreaks. The friends of this excommunicated youth, crowding around him with their sympathy, would probably express surprise that One who could work such a cure should be unable to protect his patient from the persecution it had raised against him, or should possess the power without using it. Nor would it be strange if such thoughts should arise in the youth's own mind. But if they did, it is certain, from what follows, that they made no lodgment there, conscious as he was that "whereas he was blind, now he saw," and satisfied that if his Benefactor "were not of God, He could do nothing" ([Joh 9:33](#)). There was a word for him too, which, if whispered in his ear from the oracles of God, would seem expressly designed to describe his case, and prepare him for the coming interview with his gracious Friend. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word. *Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for My name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; BUT He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed*" ([Isa 66:5](#)). But how was He engaged to whom such noble testimony had been given, and for whom such persecution had been borne? Uttering, perhaps, in secret, "with strong crying and tears," the words of the prophetic psalm, "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let none that seek Thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel; because for Thy sake I have borne reproach ... and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me" ([Ps 69:6, 7, 9](#)).

**35-38. Jesus heard**—that is, by intelligence brought Him.

**that they had cast him out; and when he had found him**—by accident? Not very likely. Sympathy in that breast could not long keep aloof from its object.

**he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?**—A question stretching purposely beyond his present attainments, in order the more quickly to lead him—in his present teachable frame—into the highest truth.

**36. He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?**—"His reply is affirmative, and believing by anticipation, promising faith as soon as Jesus shall say who He is" [Stier].

**37. Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him**—the new sense of sight having at that moment its highest exercise, in gazing upon "the Light of the world."

**38. he said, Lord, I believe: and he worshipped him**—a *faith* and a *worship*, beyond doubt, meant to express far more than he would think proper to any human "prophet" ([Joh 9:17](#))—the unstudied, resistless expression, probably of SUPREME faith and adoration, though without the full understanding of what that implied.

**39-41. Jesus said**—perhaps at the same time, but after a crowd, including some of the skeptical and scornful rulers, had, on seeing Jesus talking with the healed youth, hastened to the spot.

**that they which see not might see, &c.**—rising to that *sight* of which the natural vision communicated to the youth was but the symbol. (See on [Joh 9:5](#), and compare [Lu 4:18](#)).

**that they which see might be made blind**—judicially incapable of apprehending and receiving the truth, to which they have wilfully shut their eyes.

**40. Are we blind also?**—We, the constituted, recognized guides of the people in spiritual things? pride and rage prompting the question.

**41. If ye were blind**—wanted light to discern My claims, and only waited to receive it.

**ye should have no sin**—none of the guilt of shutting out the light.

**ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth**—Your claim to possess light, while rejecting Me, is that which seals you up in the guilt of unbelief.

## CHAPTER 10

[Joh 10:1-21](#). The Good Shepherd.

This discourse seems plainly to be a continuation of the closing verses of the ninth chapter. The figure was familiar to the Jewish ear (from [Jer 23:1-40](#); [Eze 34:1-31](#); [Zec 11:1-17](#), &c.). "This simple creature [the sheep] has this special note among all animals, that it quickly hears the voice of the shepherd, follows no one else, depends entirely on him, and seeks help from him alone—cannot help itself, but is shut up to another's aid" [Luther in Stier].

**1, 2. He that entereth not by the door**—the legitimate way (without saying what that was, as yet).

**into the sheepfold**—the sacred enclosure of God's true people.

**climbeth up some other way**—not referring to the assumption of ecclesiastical office without an external call, for those Jewish rulers, specially aimed at, had this ([Mt 23:2](#)), but to the want of a true spiritual commission, the seal of heaven going along with the outward authority; it is the assumption of the spiritual guidance of the people *without this* that is meant.

**2. he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep**—a true, divinely recognized shepherd.

**3. To him the porter openeth**—that is, *right of free access* is given, by order of Him to whom the sheep belong; for it is better not to give the allusion a more specific interpretation [Calvin, Meyer, Luthardt].

**and the sheep hear his voice**—This and all that follows, though it admits of important *application* to every faithful shepherd of God's flock, is in its direct and highest sense true only of "the great Shepherd of the sheep," who in the first five verses seems plainly, under the simple character of a true shepherd, to be drawing His own portrait [Lampe, Stier, &c.].

**7-14. I am the door of the sheep**—that is, *the way in* to the fold, with all blessed privileges, both for shepherds and sheep (compare [Joh 14:6](#); [Eph 2:18](#)).

**8. All that ever came before me**—the false prophets; not as claiming the prerogatives of Messiah, but as perverters of the people from the way of life, all pointing to Him [Olshausen].

**the sheep did not hear them**—the instinct of their divinely taught hearts preserving them from seducers, and attaching them to the heaven-sent prophets, of whom it is said that "the Spirit of Christ was in them" ([1Pe 1:11](#)).

**9. by me if any man enter in**—whether shepherd or sheep.

**shall be saved**—the great object of the pastoral office, as of all the divine arrangements towards mankind.

**and shall go in and out and find pasture**—*in*, as to a place of *safety* and *repose*; *out*, as to "green pastures and still waters" ([Ps 23:2](#)) for nourishment and refreshing, and all this

only transferred to another clime, and enjoyed in another manner, at the close of this earthly scene ([Re 7:17](#)).

**10. I am come that they might have life, and ... more abundantly**—not merely to *preserve* but *impart* LIFE, and communicate it in rich and unfailing exuberance. What a claim! Yet it is only an echo of all His teaching; and He who uttered these and like words must be either a blasphemer, all worthy of the death He died, or "God with us"—there can be no middle course.

**11. I am the good shepherd**—emphatically, and, in the sense intended, exclusively so ([Isa 40:11](#); [Eze 34:23](#); [37:24](#); [Zec 13:7](#)).

**the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep**—Though this may be said of literal shepherds, who, even for their brute flock, have, like David, encountered "the lion and the bear" at the risk of their own lives, and still more of faithful pastors who, like the early bishops of Rome, have been the foremost to brave the fury of their enemies against the flock committed to their care; yet here, beyond doubt, it points to the struggle which was to issue in the willing surrender of the Redeemer's own life, to save His sheep from destruction.

**12. an hireling ... whose own the sheep are not**—who has no *property*, in them. By this He points to His own peculiar relation to the sheep, the same as His Father's, the great Proprietor and Lord of the flock, who styles Him "My Shepherd, *the Man that is My Fellow*" ([Zec 13:7](#)), and though faithful under-shepherds are so in their Master's interest, that they feel a measure of His own concern for their charge, the language is strictly applicable only to "the Son over His own house" ([Heb 3:6](#)).

**seeth the wolf coming**—not *the devil* distinctively, as some take it [Stier, Alford, &c.], but generally whoever comes upon the flock with hostile intent, in whatever form: though the wicked one, no doubt, is *at the bottom* of such movements [Luthardt].

**14. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep**—in the peculiar sense of [2Ti 2:19](#).

**am known of mine**—the soul's response to the voice that has inwardly and efficaciously called it; for of this mutual loving acquaintance ours is the *effect* of His. "The Redeemer's knowledge of us is the *active* element, penetrating us with His power and life; that of believers is the *passive* principle, the reception of His life and light. In this reception, however, an assimilation of the soul to the sublime object of its knowledge and love takes place; and thus an activity, though a derived one, is unfolded, which shows itself in obedience to His commands" [Olshausen]. From this mutual knowledge Jesus rises to another and loftier reciprocity of knowledge.

**15-18. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father**—What claim to absolute equality with the Father could exceed this? (See on [Mt 11:27](#)).

**and I lay down my life for the sheep**—How sublime this, immediately following the lofty claim of the preceding clause! It is the riches and the poverty of "the Word made flesh"—one glorious Person reaching at once up to the Throne and down even to the dust

of death, "that we might live through Him." A candid interpretation of the words, "*for the sheep*," ought to go far to establish the special relation of the vicarious death of Christ to the Church.

**16. other sheep I have ... not of this fold: them also I must bring**—He means the perishing Gentiles, *already His "sheep"* in the love of His heart and the purpose of His grace to "*bring them*" in due time.

**they shall hear my voice**—*This is not the language of mere foresight that they would believe, but the expression of a purpose to draw them to Himself by an inward and efficacious call, which would infallibly issue in their spontaneous accession to Him.*

**and there shall be one fold**—rather "one flock" (for the word for "fold," as in the foregoing verses, is quite different).

**17. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, &c.**—As the highest act of the Son's love to the Father was the laying down of His life for the sheep at His "commandment," so the Father's love to Him as His *incarnate* Son reaches its consummation, and finds its highest justification, in that sublimest and most affecting of all acts.

**that I might take it again**—His resurrection-life being indispensable to the accomplishment of the fruit of His death.

**18. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again**—It is impossible for language more plainly and emphatically to express the *absolute voluntariness* of Christ's death, such a voluntariness as it would be manifest presumption in any mere *creature* to affirm of his own death. It is beyond all doubt the language of One who was conscious that *His life was His own* (which no creature's is), and therefore His to surrender or retain *at will*. Here lay the glory of His sacrifice, that it was *purely* voluntary. The claim of "power to take it again" is no less important, as showing that His resurrection, though ascribed to the Father, in the sense we shall presently see, was nevertheless *His own assertion of His own right to life* as soon as the purposes of His voluntary death were accomplished.

**This commandment**—to "lay down His—life, that He might take it again."

**have I received of my Father**—So that Christ died at once by "command" of His Father, and by such a voluntary obedience to that command as has made Him (so to speak) infinitely dear to the Father. The *necessity* of Christ's death, in the light of these profound sayings, must be manifest to all but the superficial student.

**19-21. There was a division ... again among the Jews for these sayings**—the light and the darkness revealing themselves with increasing clearness in the separation of the teachable from the obstinately prejudiced. The one saw in Him only "a devil and a madman"; the other revolted at the thought that *such words* could come from one possessed, and sight be given to the blind by a demoniac; showing clearly that a deeper impression had been made upon them than their words expressed.

[Joh 10:22-42](#). Discourse at the Feast of Dedication—From the Fury of His Enemies Jesus Escapes beyond Jordan, Where Many Believe on Him.

**22, 23. it was ... the feast of the dedication**—celebrated rather more than *two months* after the feast of tabernacles, during which intermediate period our Lord seems to have remained in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. It was instituted by Jude Maccabeus, to commemorate the purification of the temple from the profanations to which it had been subjected by Antiochus Epiphanes 165 B.C., and kept for eight days, from the twenty-fifth Chisleu (December), the day on which Judas began the first joyous celebration of it ([1 Maccabees 4:52,56,59](#); and Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7.7.7).

**it was winter**—implying some *inclemency*. Therefore,

**23. Jesus walked ... in Solomon's porch**—for shelter. This portico was on the east side of the temple, and Josephus says it was part of the original structure of Solomon [*Antiquities*, 20.9.7].

**24. Then came the Jews—the rulers.** (See on [Joh 1:19](#)).

**How long dost thou make us to doubt?**—"hold us in suspense" (*Margin*).

**If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly**—But when the plainest *evidence* of it was resisted, what weight could a mere *assertion* of it have?

**25, 26. Jesus answered them, I told you**—that is, in substance, what I am (for example [Joh 7:37, 38](#); [8:12, 35, 36, 58](#)).

**26. ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said**—referring to the whole strain of the Parable of the Sheep, ([Joh 10:1](#), &c.).

**27-30. My sheep hear my voice, &c.**—(See on [Joh 10:8](#)).

**28. I give unto them eternal life**—not "will give them"; for it is a present gift. (See on [Joh 3:36](#); [Joh 5:24](#)). It is a very grand utterance, couched in the language of majestic authority.

**29. My Father, which gave them me**—(See on [Joh 6:37-39](#)).

**is greater than all**—with whom no adverse power can contend. It is a general expression of an admitted truth, and what follows shows for what purpose it was uttered, "and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." The impossibility of true believers being lost, in the midst of all the temptations which they may encounter, does not consist in their fidelity and decision, but is founded upon the *power of God*. Here the doctrine of predestination is presented in its sublime and sacred aspect; there is a predestination of the holy, which is taught from one end of the Scriptures to the other; not, indeed, of such a nature that an "irresistible grace" *compels* the opposing will of man (of course not), but so that that will of man which receives and loves the commands of God is *produced* only by God's grace (Olshausen—a testimony all the more valuable, being given in spite of *Lutheran* prejudice).

**30. I and my Father are one**—Our language admits not of the precision of the original in this great saying. "Are" is in the *masculine* gender—"we (two persons) are"; while "one" is *neuter*—"one thing." Perhaps "one interest" expresses, as nearly as may be, the purport of the

saying. There seemed to be some contradiction between His saying they had been given by His Father into *His own* hands, out of which they could not be plucked, and then saying that none could pluck them out of *His Father's* hands, as if they had not been given out of them. "*Neither have they,*" says He; "though He has given them to Me, they are as much in His own almighty hands as ever—they *cannot be*, and when given to Me they are not, given away from Himself; for He and I HAVE ALL IN COMMON." Thus it will be seen, that, though *oneness of essence* is not the precise thing here affirmed, that truth is *the basis of what is affirmed*, without which it would not be true. And Augustine was right in saying the "*We are*" condemns the *Sabellians* (who denied the *distinction of Persons* in the Godhead), while the "*one*" (as explained) condemns the *Arians* (who denied the unity of their essence).

**31. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him**—and for precisely the same thing as before ([Joh 8:58, 59](#)).

**32. Many good works have I showed you**—that is, works of pure benevolence (as in [Ac 10:38](#), "Who went about doing good," &c.; see [Mr 7:37](#)).

**from my Father**—not so much by His power, but as directly *commissioned by Him to do them*. This He says to meet the imputation of unwarrantable assumption of the divine prerogatives [Luthardt].

**for which of those works do ye stone me?**—"are ye stoning (that is, going to stone) me?"

**33. for a blasphemy**—whose legal punishment was stoning ([Le 24:11-16](#)).

**thou, being a man**—that is, a man only.

**makest thyself God**—Twice before they understood Him to advance the same claim, and both times they prepared themselves to avenge what they took to be the insulted honor of God, as here, in the way directed by their law ([Joh 5:18; 8:59](#)).

**34-36. Is it not written in your law**—in [Ps 82:6](#), respecting judges or magistrates.

**Ye are gods**—being the *official representatives* and *commissioned agents* of God.

**35, 36. If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came ... Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest**—The whole force of this reasoning, which has been but in part seized by the commentators, lies in what is said of the two parties compared. The *comparison* of Himself with mere men, divinely commissioned, is intended to show (as Neander well expresses it) that the idea of a communication of the Divine Majesty to human nature was by no means foreign to the revelations of the Old Testament; but there is also a *contrast* between Himself and all merely human representatives of God—the one "*sanctified by the Father and sent into the world*"; the other, "*to whom the word of God (merely) came,*" which is expressly designed to prevent His being massed up with them as only one of many human officials of God. *It is never said of Christ* that "the word of the Lord came to Him"; whereas this is the well-known formula by which the divine commission, even to the highest of *mere men*, is expressed, as John the Baptist

(Lu 3:2). The reason is that given by the Baptist himself (see on Joh 3:31). The contrast is between those "to whom the word of God came"—men of the earth, earthy, who were merely privileged to get a divine *message* to utter (if prophets), or a divine *office* to discharge (if judges)—and "Him whom (not being of the earth at all) *the Father sanctified* (or set apart), and *sent into the world*," an expression *never used of any merely human messenger of God, and used only of Himself*.

**because, I said, I am the Son of God**—It is worthy of special notice that our Lord *had not said*, in so many words, that He was the Son of God, on this occasion. But He had said what beyond doubt amounted to it—namely, that He gave His sheep eternal life, and none could pluck them out of His hand; that He had got them from His Father, in whose hands, though given to Him, they still remained, and out of whose hand none could pluck them; and that they were *the indefeasible property of both*, inasmuch as "He and His Father were one." Our Lord considers all this as just saying of Himself, "I am the Son of God"—*one nature with Him, yet mysteriously of Him*. The parenthesis (Joh 10:35), "and the Scripture cannot be broken," referring to the terms used of magistrates in the eighty-second Psalm, has an important bearing on the *authority* of the living oracles. "The Scripture, as the expressed will of the unchangeable God, is itself unchangeable and indissoluble" [Olshausen]. (Compare Mt 5:17).

**37-39. though ye believe not me, believe the works**—There was in Christ's words, independently of any miracles, a self-evidencing truth, majesty and grace, which those who had any spiritual susceptibility were unable to resist (Joh 7:46; 8:30). But, for those who wanted this, "the works" were a mighty help. When these failed, the case was desperate indeed.

**that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him**—thus reiterating His claim to essential *oneness with the Father*, which He had only *seemed* to soften down, that He might calm their rage and get their ear again for a moment.

**39. Therefore they sought again to take him**—true to their original understanding of His words, for they saw perfectly well that He *meant* to "make Himself God" throughout all this dialogue.

**he escaped out of their hand**—(See on Lu 4:30; Joh 8:59).

**40-42. went away again beyond Jordan ... the place where John at first baptized**—(See on Joh 1:28).

**41. many resorted to him**—on whom the ministry of the Baptist had left permanent impressions.

**John did no miracle, but all things John spake of this man were true**—what they now heard and saw in Jesus only confirming in their minds the divinity of His forerunner's mission, though unaccompanied by any of His Master's miracles. And thus, "many believed on Him there."

## CHAPTER 11

[Joh 11:1-46](#). Lazarus Raised from the Dead—The Consequences of This.

**1. of Bethany**—at the east side of Mount Olivet.

**the town of Mary and her sister Martha**—thus distinguishing it from the other Bethany, "beyond Jordan." (See on [Joh 1:28](#); [Joh 10:40](#)).

**2. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, &c.**—This, though not recorded by our Evangelist till [Joh 12:3](#), was so well known in the teaching of all the churches, according to our Lord's prediction ([Mt 26:13](#)), that it is here alluded to by anticipation, as the most natural way of identifying her; and she is first named, though the younger, as the more distinguished of the two. She "anointed THE Lord," says the Evangelist—led doubtless to the use of this term here, as he was about to exhibit Him illustriously as the *Lord of Life*.

**3-5. his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick**—a most womanly appeal, yet how reverential, to the known affection of her Lord for the patient. (See [Joh 11:5, 11](#)). "Those whom Christ loves are no more exempt than others from their share of earthly trouble and anguish: rather are they bound over to it more surely" [Trench].

**4. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death—to result in death. but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby**—that is, by this glory of God. (See *Greek*.) Remarkable language this, which from creature lips would have been intolerable. It means that the glory of God manifested in the resurrection of dead Lazarus would be shown to be the glory, *personally* and immediately, of THE Son.

**5. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus**—what a picture!—one that in every age has attracted the admiration of the whole Christian Church. No wonder that those miserable skeptics who have carped at the ethical system of the Gospel, as not embracing private friendships in the list of its virtues, have been referred to the Saviour's peculiar regard for this family as a triumphant refutation, if such were needed.

**6. When he heard he was sick, he abode two days still ... where he was**—at least twenty-five miles off. Beyond all doubt this was just to let things come to their worst, in order to display His glory. But how trying, meantime, to the faith of his friends, and how unlike the way in which love to a dying friend usually shows itself, on which it is plain that Mary reckoned. But the ways of *divine* are not as the ways of *human* love. Often they are the reverse. When His people are sick, in body or spirit; when their case is waxing more and more desperate every day; when all hope of recovery is about to expire—just then and therefore it is that "*He abides two days still in the same place where He is.*" Can they still hope against hope? Often they do not; but "this is their infirmity." For it is His chosen style of acting. We have been well taught it, and should not *now* have the lesson to learn. From the days of Moses was it given sublimely forth as the character of His grandest interpositions, that "the Lord will judge His people and repent Himself for His servants"—*when He seeth that their power is gone* ([De 32:36](#)).

7-10. **Let us go into Judea again**—He was now in Perea, "beyond Jordan."

8. **His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought, &c.**—literally, "were (just) now seeking" "to stone thee" (Joh 10:31).

**goest thou thither again?**—*to certain death*, as Joh 11:16 shows they thought.

9. **Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day?**—(See on Joh 9:4). Our Lord's day had now reached its eleventh hour, and having till now "walked in the day," He would not *mistime* the remaining and more critical part of His work, which would be as fatal, He says, as omitting it altogether; for "if a man (so He speaks, putting Himself under the same great law of duty as all other men—if a man) walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

11-16. **Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may wake him out of sleep**—Illustrious title! "*Our friend Lazarus.*" To *Abraham only* is it accorded in the Old Testament, and not till *after his death*, (2Ch 20:7; Isa 41:8), to which our attention is called in the New Testament (Jas 2:23). When Jesus came in the flesh, His forerunner applied this name, in a certain sense, to himself (Joh 3:29); and into the same fellowship the Lord's chosen disciples are declared to have come (Joh 15:13-15). "The phrase here employed, "our friend Lazarus," means more than "he whom *Thou* lovest" in Joh 11:3, for it implies that Christ's affection was *reciprocated* by Lazarus" [Lampe]. Our Lord had been told only that Lazarus was "sick." But the change which his two days' delay had produced is here tenderly alluded to. Doubtless, His spirit was all the while with His dying, and now dead "friend." The symbol of "sleep" for *death* is common to all languages, and familiar to us in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, however, a higher meaning is put into it, in relation to believers in Jesus (see on 1Th 4:14), a sense hinted at, and clearly, in Ps 17:15 [Luthardt]; and the "awaking out of sleep" acquires a corresponding sense far transcending bare resuscitation.

12. **if he sleep, he shall do well**—literally, "be preserved"; that is, recover. "Why then go to Judea?"

14. **Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead**—Says Bengel beautifully, "Sleep is the death of the saints, in the language of heaven; but this language the disciples here understood not; incomparable is the generosity of the divine manner of discoursing, but such is the slowness of men's apprehension that Scripture often has to descend to the more miserable style of human discourse; compare Mt 16:11."

15. **I am glad for your sakes I was not there**—This certainly implies that if He had been present, Lazarus would not have died; not because He could not have resisted the importunities of the sisters, but because, in presence of the personal Life, death could not have reached His friend [Luthardt]. "It is beautifully congruous to the divine decorum that in presence of the Prince of Life no one is ever said to have died" [Bengel].

**that ye may believe**—This is added to explain His "gladness" at not having been present. His friend's death, as such, could not have been to Him "joyous"; the sequel shows it was "grievous"; but *for them* it was safe ([Php 3:1](#)).

**16. Thomas, ... called Didymus**—or "the twin."

**Let us also go, that we may die with him**—lovely spirit, though tinged with some sadness, such as reappears at [Joh 14:5](#), showing the tendency of this disciple to take the *dark* view of things. On a memorable occasion this tendency opened the door to downright, though but momentary, unbelief ([Joh 20:25](#)). Here, however, though alleged by many interpreters there is nothing of the sort. He perceives clearly how this journey to Judea will end, as respects his Master, and not only sees in it peril to themselves, as they all did, but feels as if he could not and cared not to survive his Master's sacrifice to the fury of His enemies. It was that kind of affection which, living only in the light of its Object, cannot contemplate, or has no heart for life, without it.

**17-19. when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days**—If he died on the day the tidings came of his illness—and was, according to the Jewish custom, buried the same day (see Jahn's *Archæology*, and [Joh 11:39](#); [Ac 5:5, 6, 10](#))—and if Jesus, after two days' further stay in Perea, set out on the day following for Bethany, some ten hours' journey, that would make out the four days; the first and last being incomplete [Meyer].

**18. Bethany was nigh Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs**—rather less than two miles; mentioned to explain the visits of sympathy noticed in the following words, which the proximity of the two places facilitated.

**19. many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them**—Thus were provided, in a most natural way, so many witnesses of the glorious miracle that was to follow, as to put the fact beyond possible question.

**20-22. Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him**—true to the *energy* and *activity* of her character, as seen in [Lu 10:38-42](#). (See on [Lu 10:38-42](#)).

**but Mary sat ... in the house**—equally true to her *placid* character. These undesigned touches not only charmingly illustrate the minute *historic fidelity* of both narratives, but their *inner harmony*.

**21. Then said Martha ... Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died**—As Mary afterwards said the same thing ([Joh 11:32](#)), it is plain they had made this very natural remark to each other, perhaps many times during these four sad days, and not without having their confidence in His love at times overclouded. Such trials of faith, however, are not peculiar to them.

**22. But I know that even now, &c.**—Energetic characters are usually sanguine, the rainbow of hope peering through the drenching cloud.

**whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee**—that is "even to the restoration of my dead brother to life," for that plainly is her meaning, as the sequel shows.

**23-27. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again**—purposely expressing Himself in general terms, to draw her out.

**24. Martha said, ... I know that he shall rise again ... at the last day**—"But are we never to see him in life till then?"

**25. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life**—"The whole power to restore, impart, and maintain life, resides in Me." (See on [Joh 1:4](#); [Joh 5:21](#)). What higher claim to supreme divinity than this grand saying can be conceived?

**he that believeth in me, though ... dead ... shall he live**—that is, The believer's death shall be swallowed up in life, and his life shall never sink into death. As death comes by sin, it is His to dissolve it; and as life flows through His righteousness, it is His to communicate and eternally maintain it ([Ro 5:21](#)). The temporary separation of soul and body is here regarded as not even interrupting, much less impairing, the new and everlasting life imparted by Jesus to His believing people.

**Believest thou this?**—Canst thou take this in?

**27. Yea, ... I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, &c.**—that is, And having *such* faith in Thee, I can believe all which that comprehends. While she had a glimmering perception that Resurrection, in every sense of the word, belonged to the Messianic office and Sonship of Jesus, she means, by this way of expressing herself, to cover much that she felt her ignorance of—as no doubt belonging to Him.

**28-32. The Master is come and calleth for thee**—The narrative does not give us this interesting detail, but Martha's words do.

**29. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly**—affection for her Lord, assurance of His sympathy, and His hope of interposition, putting a spring into her distressed spirit.

**31. The Jews ... followed her ... to the grave**—Thus *casually* were provided witnesses of the glorious miracle that followed, *not prejudiced*, certainly, *in favor* of Him who wrought it.

**to weep there**—according to Jewish practice, for some days after burial.

**fell at his feet**—more impassioned than her sister, though her words were fewer. (See on [Joh 11:21](#)).

**33-38. When Jesus ... saw her weeping, and the Jews ... weeping ... he groaned in the spirit**—the tears of Mary and her friends acting sympathetically upon Jesus, and drawing forth His emotions. What a vivid and beautiful outcoming of His "real" humanity! The word here rendered "groaned" does not mean "sighed" or "grieved," but rather "powerfully checked his emotion"—made a visible effort to restrain those tears which were ready to gush from His eyes.

**and was troubled**—rather, "troubled himself" (*Margin*); referring probably to this visible difficulty of repressing His emotions.

**34. Where have ye laid him? ... Lord, come and see**—Perhaps it was to retain composure enough to ask this question, and on receiving the answer to proceed with them to the spot, that He checked Himself.

**35. Jesus wept**—This beautifully conveys the sublime brevity of the two original words; else "*shed tears*" might have better conveyed the difference between the word here used and that twice employed in [Joh 11:33](#), and there properly rendered "weeping," denoting the loud wail for the dead, while that of Jesus consisted of *silent tears*. Is it for nothing that the Evangelist, some *sixty years* after it occurred, holds up to all ages with such touching brevity the sublime spectacle of *the Son of God in tears*? What a seal of His perfect oneness with us in the most redeeming feature of our stricken humanity! But was there nothing in those tears beyond sorrow for human suffering and death? Could these *effects* move Him without suggesting the *cause*? Who can doubt that in His ear every feature of the scene proclaimed that stern law of the Kingdom, "*The wages of sin is death*" ([Ro 6:23](#)), and that this element in His visible emotion underlay all the rest?

**36. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!**—We thank you, O ye visitors from Jerusalem, for this spontaneous testimony to the *human* tenderness of the Son of God.

**37. And**—rather, "But."

**some ... said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man should not have died?**—The former exclamation came from the better-feeling portion of the spectators; this betokens a measure of suspicion. It hardly goes the length of attesting the miracle on the blind man; but "if (as everybody says) He did that, why could He not also have kept Lazarus alive?" As to the restoration of the dead man to life, they never so much as thought of it. But *this disposition to dictate to divine power, and almost to peril our confidence in it upon its doing our bidding, is not confined to men of no faith.*

**38. Jesus again groaning in himself**—that is, as at [Joh 11:33](#), checked or repressed His rising feelings, in the former instance, of sorrow, here of righteous indignation at their unreasonable unbelief; (compare [Mr 3:5](#)) [Webster and Wilkinson]. But here, too, struggling emotion was deeper, now that His eye was about to rest on the spot where lay, in the still horrors of death, His "friend."

**a cave**—the cavity, natural or artificial, of a rock. This, with the number of condoling visitors from Jerusalem, and the costly ointment with which Mary afterwards anointed Jesus at Bethany, all go to show that the family was in good circumstances.

**39-44. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone**—spoken to the attendants of Martha and Mary; for it was a work of no little labor [Grotius]. According to the Talmudists, it was forbidden to open a grave after the stone was placed upon it. Besides other dangers, they were apprehensive of legal impurity by contact with the dead. Hence they avoided coming nearer a grave than four cubits [Maimonides in Lampe]. But He who touched the leper, and the bier of the widow of Nain's son, rises here also above these Judaic memorials of evils, every

one of which He had come to roll away. *Observe here what our Lord did Himself, and what He made others do.* As Elijah himself repaired the altar on Carmel, arranged the wood, cut the victim, and placed the pieces on the fuel, but made the by-standers fill the surrounding trench with water, that no suspicion might arise of fire having been secretly applied to the pile ([1Ki 18:30-35](#)); so our Lord would let the most skeptical see that, without laying a hand on the stone that covered His friend, He could recall him to life. But what could be done by human hand He orders to be done, reserving only to Himself what transcended the ability of all creatures.

**Martha, the sister of ... the dead**—and as such the proper guardian of the precious remains; the relationship being *here* mentioned to account for her venturing gently to remonstrate against their exposure, in a state of decomposition, to eyes that had loved him so tenderly in life.

**Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days**—(See on [Joh 11:17](#)). It is wrong to suppose from this (as Lampe and others do) that, like the by-standers, she had not thought of his restoration to life. But the glimmerings of hope which she cherished from the first ([Joh 11:22](#)), and which had been brightened by what Jesus said to her ([Joh 11:23-27](#)), had suffered a momentary eclipse on the proposal to expose the now sightless corpse. *To such fluctuations all real faith is subject in dark hours.* (See, for example, the case of Job).

**40. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?**—He had not said those very words, but this was the scope of all that He had uttered to her about His life-giving power ([Joh 11:23, 25, 26](#)); a gentle yet emphatic and most instructive rebuke: "Why doth the restoration of life, even to a decomposing corpse, seem hopeless in the presence of the Resurrection and the Life? Hast thou yet to learn that 'if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth?'" ([Mr 9:23](#)).

**41. Jesus lifted up his eyes**—an expression marking His calm solemnity. (Compare [Joh 17:1](#)).

**Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me**—rather, "heardest Me," referring to a specific prayer offered by Him, probably on intelligence of the case reaching Him ([Joh 11:3, 4](#)); for His living and loving oneness with the Father was maintained and manifested in the flesh, not merely by the spontaneous and uninterrupted outgoing of Each to Each in spirit, but by specific actings of faith and exercises of prayer about each successive case as it emerged. He prayed (says Luthardt well) not for what He wanted, but for the manifestation of what He had; and having the bright consciousness of the answer in the felt liberty to ask it, and the assurance that it was at hand, He gives thanks for this with a grand simplicity before performing the act.

**42. And**—rather, "Yet."

**I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they might believe that thou hast sent me**—Instead of praying now, He simply gives thanks for answer to prayer offered ere He left Perea, and adds that His doing even this, in the audience of the people, was not from any doubt of the prevalency of His prayers in any case, but to show the people that *He did nothing without His Father, but all by direct communication with Him.*

**43, 44. and when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice**—On one other occasion only did He this—on the *cross*. His last utterance was a "loud cry" (Mt 27:50). "He shall not cry," said the prophet, nor, in His ministry, did He. What a sublime contrast is this "loud cry" to the magical "whisperings" and "mutterings" of which we read in Isa 8:19; 29:4 (as Grotius remarks)! It is second only to the grandeur of that voice which shall raise all the dead (Joh 5:28, 29; 1Th 4:16).

**44. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go**—Jesus will no more do this Himself than roll away the stone. The one was the necessary *preparation* for resurrection, the other the necessary *sequel* to it. The life-giving act alone He reserves to Himself. So *in the quickening of the dead to spiritual life, human instrumentality is employed first to prepare the way, and then to turn it to account.*

**45, 46. many ... which ... had seen ... believed ... But some ... went ... to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done**—the two classes which continually reappear in the Gospel history; nor is there ever any great work of God which does not produce both. "It is remarkable that on each of the three occasions on which our Lord raised the dead, a large number of persons was assembled. In two instances, the resurrection of the widow's son and of Lazarus, these were all witnesses of the miracle; in the third (of Jairus' daughter) they were necessarily cognizant of it. Yet this important circumstance is in each case only incidentally noticed by the historians, not put forward or appealed to as a proof of their veracity. In regard to this miracle, we observe a greater degree of preparation, both in the provident arrangement of events, and in our Lord's actions and words than in any other. The preceding miracle (cure of the man born blind) is distinguished from all others by the open and formal investigation of its facts. And both these miracles, the most public and best attested of all, are related by John, who wrote long after the other Evangelists" [Webster and Wilkinson].

**47-54. What do we? for this man doeth many miracles**—"While we trifle, 'this man,' by His 'many miracles,' will carry all before Him; the popular enthusiasm will bring on a revolution, which will precipitate the Romans upon us, and our all will go down in one common ruin." What a testimony to the reality of our Lord's miracles, and their resistless effect, from His bitterest enemies!

**51. Caiaphas ... prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation**—He meant nothing more than that the way to prevent the apprehended ruin of the nation was to make a sacrifice

of the Disturber of their peace. But in giving utterance to this suggestion of political expediency, he was so guided as to give forth a divine prediction of deep significance; and God so ordered it that it should come from the lips of the high priest for that memorable year, the recognized head of God's visible people, whose ancient office, symbolized by the Urim and Thummim, was to decide in the last resort, all vital questions as the oracle of the divine will.

**52. and not for that nation only, &c.**—These are the Evangelist's words, not Caiaphas'.

**53. they took council together to put him to death**—Caiaphas but expressed what the party was secretly wishing, but afraid to propose.

**Jesus ... walked no more openly among the Jews**—How could He, unless He had wished to die before His time?

**near to the wilderness**—of Judea.

**a city called Ephraim**—between Jerusalem and Jericho.

**55-57. passover ... at hand ... many went ... up ... before the passover, to purify themselves**—from any legal uncleanness which would have disqualified them from keeping the feast. This is mentioned to introduce the graphic statement which follows.

**56. sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple**—giving forth the various conjectures and speculations about the probability of His coming to the feast.

**that he will not come**—The form of this question implies the opinion that He *would* come.

**57. chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment that if any knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him**—This is mentioned to account for the conjectures whether He would come, in spite of this determination to seize Him.

## CHAPTER 12

[Joh 12:1-11](#). The Anointing at Bethany.

(See on [Mt 26:6-13](#)).

**1-8. six days before the passover**—that is, on the sixth day before it; probably after sunset on *Friday* evening, or the commencement of the Jewish *sabbath* preceding the passover.

**2. Martha served**—This, with what is afterwards said of Mary's way of honoring her Lord, is so true to the character in which those two women appear in [Lu 10:38-42](#), as to constitute one of the strongest and most delightful confirmations of the truth of both narratives. (See also on [Joh 11:20](#)).

**Lazarus ... sat at the table**—"Between the raised Lazarus and the healed leper (Simon, [Mr 14:3](#)), the Lord probably sits as between two trophies of His glory" [Stier].

**3. spikenard**—or pure *nard*, a celebrated aromatic ([So 1:12](#)).

**anointed the feet of Jesus**—and "poured it on His head" ([Mt 26:7](#); [Mr 14:3](#)). The only use of this was to refresh and exhilarate—a grateful compliment in the East, amidst the closeness of a heated atmosphere, with many guests at a feast. Such was the form in which Mary's love to Christ, at so much cost to herself, poured itself out.

**4. Judas ... who should betray him**—For the reason why this is here mentioned, see on [Mr 14:11](#).

**5. three hundred pence**—between nine and ten pounds sterling.

**6. had the bag**—the purse.

**bare what was put therein**—not, bare it off by theft, though that he did; but simply, had charge of its contents, was treasurer to Jesus and the Twelve. How worthy of notice is this arrangement, by which an avaricious and dishonest person was not only taken into the number of the Twelve, but entrusted with the custody of their little property! The purposes which this served are obvious enough; but it is further noticeable, that the remotest hint was never given to the eleven of His true character, nor did the disciples most favored with the intimacy of Jesus ever suspect him, till a few minutes before he voluntarily separated himself from their company—for ever!

**7. said Jesus, Let her alone, against the day of my burying hath she done this**—not that she thought of His burial, much less reserved any of her nard to anoint her dead Lord. But as the time was so near at hand when that office would have to be performed, *and she was not to have that privilege even alter the spices were brought for the purpose* ([Mr 16:1](#)), He lovingly regards it as done now.

**8. the poor always ... with you**—referring to [De 15:11](#).

**but me ... not always**—a gentle hint of His approaching departure. He adds ([Mr 14:8](#)), "*She hath done what she could,*" a noble testimony, embodying a principle of immense importance. "Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole

world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Mt 26:13; Mr 14:9). "In the act of love done to Him she had erected to herself an eternal monument, as lasting as the Gospel, the eternal word of God. From generation to generation this remarkable prophecy of the Lord has been fulfilled; and even we, in explaining this saying of the Redeemer, of necessity contribute to its accomplishment" [Olshausen]. "Who but Himself had the power to ensure to any work of man, even if resounding in his own time through the whole earth, an imperishable remembrance in the stream of history? Behold once more here, the majesty of His royal judicial supremacy in the government of the world, in this, Verily I say unto you" [Stier]. Beautiful are the lessons here: (1) *Love to Christ transfigures the humblest services*. All, indeed, who have themselves a heart value its least outgoings beyond the most costly mechanical performances; but how does it endear the Saviour to us to find Him endorsing the principle as His own standard in judging of character and deeds!

What though in poor and humble guise  
 Thou here didst sojourn, cottage-born,  
 Yet from Thy glory in the skies  
 Our earthly gold Thou didst not scorn.  
 For Love delights to bring her best,  
 And where Love is, that offering evermore is blest.  
 Love on the Saviour's dying head  
 Her spikenard drops unblam'd may pour,  
 May mount His cross, and wrap Him dead  
 In spices from the golden shore.

Keble

(2) Works of *utility* should never be set in opposition to the promptings of self-sacrificing *love*, and the sincerity of those who do so is to be suspected. Under the mask of concern for the poor at home, how many excuse themselves from all care of the perishing heathen abroad. (3) Amidst conflicting duties, that which our "hand (*presently*) findeth to do" is to be preferred, and even a less duty *only to be done now* to a greater *that can be done at any time*. (4) "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2Co 8:12).—"She hath done what she could" (Mr 14:8). (5) As Jesus beheld in spirit the universal diffusion of His Gospel, while His lowest depth of humiliation was only approaching, so He regards *the facts of His earthly history* as constituting *the substance of this Gospel*, and the relation of them as just the "preaching of this Gospel." Not that preachers are to confine themselves to a bare narration of these facts, but that they are to make their whole preaching turn upon them as its grand center, and derive

from them its proper vitality; all that goes before this in the Bible being but the *preparation* for them, and all that follows but the *sequel*.

**9-11.** Crowds of the Jerusalem Jews hastened to Bethany, not so much to see Jesus, whom they knew to be there, as to see dead Lazarus alive; and this, issuing in their accession to Christ, led to a plot against the life of Lazarus also, as the only means of arresting the triumphs of Jesus (see [Joh 12:19](#))—to such a pitch had these chief priests come of diabolical determination to shut out the light from themselves, and quench it from the earth!

[Joh 12:12-19](#). Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

(See on [Mt 21:1-9](#); and [Lu 19:29-36](#)).

**12. On the next day**—the Lord's day, or Sunday (see on [Joh 12:1](#)); the tenth day of the Jewish month Nisan, on which the paschal lamb was set apart to be "kept up until the fourteenth day of the same month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel were to kill it in the evening" ([Ex 12:3, 6](#)). Even so, from the day of this solemn entry into Jerusalem, "Christ our Passover" was virtually set apart to be "sacrificed for us" ([1Co 5:7](#)).

**16. when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, &c.**—The Spirit, descending on them from the glorified Saviour at Pentecost, opened their eyes suddenly to the true sense of the Old Testament, brought vividly to their recollection this and other Messianic predictions, and to their unspeakable astonishment showed them that they, and all the actors in these scenes, had been unconsciously fulfilling those predictions.

[Joh 12:20-36](#). Some Greeks Desire to See Jesus—The Discourse and Scene Thereupon.

**20-22. Greeks**—Not Grecian Jews, but Greek proselytes to the Jewish faith, who were wont to attend the annual festivals, particularly this primary one, the Passover.

**The same came therefore to Philip ... of Bethsaida**—possibly as being from the same quarter.

**saying, Sir, we would see Jesus**—certainly in a far better sense than Zaccheus ([Lu 19:3](#)). Perhaps He was then in that part of the temple court to which Gentile proselytes had no access. "These men from the *west* represent, at the end of Christ's life, what the wise men from the *east* represented at its beginning; but those come to the cross of the King, even as these to His manger" [Stier].

**22. Philip ... telleth Andrew**—As follow townsmen of Bethsaida ([Joh 1:44](#)), these two seem to have drawn to each other.

**Andrew and Philip tell Jesus**—The minuteness of these details, while they add to the graphic force of the narrative, serves to prepare us for something important to come out of this introduction.

**23-26. Jesus answered them, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified**—that is, They would see Jesus, would they? Yet a little moment, and they shall see Him so as now they dream not of. The middle wall of partition that keeps them out from the

commonwealth of Israel is on the eve of breaking down, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto Me"; I see them "flying as a cloud, and as doves to their cotes"—a glorious event that will be for the Son of man, by which this is to be brought about. It is His *death* He thus sublimely and delicately alluded to. Lost in the scenes of triumph which this desire of the Greeks to see Him called up before His view, He gives no direct answer to their petition for an interview, but sees the cross which was to bring them gilded with glory.

**24. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit**—The *necessity* of His death is here brightly expressed, and its proper operation and fruit—*life springing forth out of death*—imaged forth by a beautiful and deeply significant law of the vegetable kingdom. For a double reason, no doubt, this was uttered—to explain what he had said of His death, as the hour of His own glorification, and to sustain His own Spirit under the agitation which was mysteriously coming over it in the view of that death.

**25. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal**—(See on [Lu 9:24](#)). Did our Lord mean to exclude Himself from the operation of the great principle here expressed—*self-renunciation, the law of self-preservation*; and its converse, *self-preservation, the law of self-destruction*? On the contrary, as He became Man to exemplify this fundamental law of the Kingdom of God in its most sublime form, so the very utterance of it on this occasion served to sustain His own Spirit in the double prospect to which He had just alluded.

**26. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: If any man serve me, him will my Father honour**—*Jesus here claims the same absolute subjection to Himself, as the law of men's exaltation to honor, as He yielded to the Father.*

**27, 28. Now is my soul troubled**—He means at the prospect of His death, just alluded to. Strange view of the Cross this, immediately after representing it as the hour of His glory! ([Joh 12:23](#)). But the two views naturally meet, and blend into one. It was the Greeks, one might say, that troubled Him. Ah! they shall see Jesus, but *to Him* it shall be a costly sight.

**and what shall I say?**—He is in a strait betwixt two. The death of the cross was, and could not but be, appalling to His spirit. But to shrink from absolute subjection to the Father, was worse still. In asking Himself, "What shall I say?" He seems as if thinking aloud, feeling His way between two dread alternatives, looking both of them sternly in the face, measuring, weighing them, in order that the choice actually made might be seen, *and even by himself the more vividly felt*, to be a profound, deliberate, spontaneous election.

**Father, save me from this hour**—To take this as a question—"Shall I say, Father, save me," &c.—as some eminent editors and interpreters do, is unnatural and jejune. It is a real petition, like that in Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from Me"; only whereas *there* He prefaces the prayer with an "If it be possible," *here* He follows it up with what is tantamount to

that—"Nevertheless for this cause came I unto this hour." The sentiment conveyed, then, by the prayer, in both cases, is twofold: (1) that only one thing could reconcile Him to the death of the cross—its being His Father's will He should endure it—and (2) that in this view of it He yielded Himself freely to it. *What He recoils from is not subjection to His Father's will: but to show how tremendous a self-sacrifice that obedience involved*, He first asks the Father to save Him from it, and then signifies how perfectly He knows that He is there for the very purpose of enduring it. Only by letting these mysterious words speak their full meaning do they become intelligible and consistent. As for those who see *no bitter elements in the death of Christ*—nothing beyond mere dying—what can they make of such a scene? and when they place it over against the feelings with which thousands of His adoring followers have welcomed death for His sake, how can they hold Him up to the admiration of men?

**28. Father, glorify thy name**—by a present testimony.

**I have both glorified it**—referring specially to the voice from heaven at His *baptism*, and again at His *transfiguration*.

**and will glorify it again**—that is, in the yet future scenes of His still deeper necessity; although this promise was a present and sublime testimony, which would irradiate the clouded spirit of the Son of man.

**29-33. The people therefore that stood by, said, It thundered; others, An angel spake to him**—some hearing only a sound, others an articulate, but to them unintelligible voice.

**30. Jesus ... said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes**—that is, probably, to correct the unfavorable impressions which His momentary agitation and mysterious prayer for deliverance may have produced on the by-standers.

**31. Now is the judgment of this world**—the world that "crucified the Lord of glory" (1Co 2:8), considered as a vast and complicated kingdom of Satan, breathing his spirit, doing his work, and involved in his doom, which Christ's death by its hands irrevocably sealed.

**now shall the prince of this world be cast out**—How differently is that fast-approaching "hour" regarded in the kingdoms of darkness and of light! "The hour of relief; from the dread Troubler of our peace—how near it is! Yet a little moment, and the day is ours!" So it was calculated and felt in the one region. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out," is a somewhat different view of the same event. We know who was right. Though yet under a veil, He sees the triumphs of the Cross in unclouded and transporting light.

**32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me**—The "I" here is emphatic—I, taking the place of the world's ejected prince. "If lifted up," means not only *after that I have been lifted up*, but, *through the virtue of that uplifting*. And truly, the death of the Cross, in all its significance, revealed in the light, and borne in upon the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost, possesses an attraction over the wide world—to civilized and savage, learned and illiterate, alike—which breaks down all opposition, assimilates all to itself, and forms out of the most heterogeneous and discordant materials a kingdom of surpassing

glory, whose uniting principle is adoring subjection "to Him that loved them." "Will draw all men 'UNTO ME,'" says He. What lips could venture to utter such a word but His, which "dropt as an honeycomb," whose manner of speaking was evermore in the same spirit of conscious equality with the Father?

**33. This he said, signifying what death he should die**—that is, "by being lifted up from the earth" on "the accursed tree" ([Joh 3:14](#); [8:28](#)).

**34. We have heard out of the law**—the scriptures of the Old Testament (referring to such places as [Ps 89:28, 29](#); [110:4](#); [Da 2:44](#); [7:13, 14](#)).

**that Christ**—the Christ "endureth for ever."

**and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up, &c.**—How can that consist with this "uplifting?" They saw very well both that He was holding Himself up as *the Christ* and *a Christ to die a violent death*; and as that ran counter to all their ideas of the Messianic prophecies, they were glad to get this seeming advantage to justify their unyielding attitude.

**35, 36. Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, &c.**—Instead of answering their question, He warns them, with mingled majesty and tenderness, against trifling with their last brief opportunity, and entreats them to let in the Light while they have it in the midst of them, that they themselves might be "light in the Lord." In this case, all the clouds which hung around His Person and Mission would speedily be dispelled, while if they continued to hate the light, bootless were all His answers to their merely speculative or captious questions. (See on [Lu 13:23](#)).

**36. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them**—He who spake as never man spake, and immediately after words fraught with unspeakable dignity and love, had to "hide Himself" from His auditors! What then must *they* have been? He retired, probably to Bethany. (The parallels are: [Mt 21:17](#); [Lu 21:37](#)).

**37-41.** It is the manner of this Evangelist alone to record his own reflections on the scenes he describes; but here, having arrived at what was virtually the close of our Lord's public ministry, he casts an affecting glance over the fruitlessness of His whole ministry on the bulk of the now doomed people.

**though he had done so many miracles**—The word used suggests their *nature* as well as *number*.

**38. That the saying of Esaias ... might be fulfilled**—This unbelief did not at all set aside the purposes of God, but, on the contrary, fulfilled them.

**39-40. Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, that they should not see, &c.**—That this expresses *a positive divine act*, by which those who wilfully close their eyes and harden their hearts against the truth are judicially *shut up* in their unbelief and impenitence, is admitted by all candid critics [as Olshausen], though many of them think it necessary to contend that this is in no way inconsistent with the liberty of the human will, which of course it is not.

**41. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him**—a key of immense importance to the opening of Isaiah's vision ([Isa 6:1-13](#)), and all similar Old Testament representations. "The Son is the King Jehovah who rules in the Old Testament and appears to the elect, as in the New Testament THE Spirit, the invisible Minister of the Son, is the Director of the Church and the Revealer in the sanctuary of the heart" [Olshausen].

**42, 43. among the chief rulers also**—rather, "even of the rulers"; such as Nicodemus and Joseph.

**because of the Pharisees**—that is, the *leaders* of the sects; for they were of it themselves.  
**put out of the synagogue**—See [Joh 9:22, 34](#).

**43. they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God**—"a severe remark, considering that several at least of these persons afterwards boldly confessed Christ. It indicates the displeasure with which God regarded their conduct at this time, and with which He continues to regard similar conduct" [Webster and Wilkinson].

**44-50. Jesus cried**—in a loud tone, and with peculiar solemnity. (Compare [Joh 7:37](#)).

**and said, He that believeth on me, &c.**—This seems to be a supplementary record of some weighty proclamations, for which there had been found no natural place before, and introduced here as a sort of *summary and winding up* of His whole testimony.

## CHAPTER 13

[Joh 13:1-20](#). At the Last Supper Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet—The Discourse Arising Thereupon.

**1. when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father**—On these beautiful euphemisms, see on [Lu 9:31](#); [Lu 9:51](#).

**having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end**—The meaning is, that on the very edge of His last sufferings, when it might have been supposed that He would be absorbed in His own awful prospects, He was so far from forgetting "His own," who were to be left struggling "in the world" after He had "departed out of it to the Father" ([Joh 17:11](#)), that in His care for them He seemed scarce to think of Himself save in connection with them: "Herein is love," not only "enduring to the end," but most affectingly manifested when, judging by a human standard, least to be expected.

**2. supper being ended**—rather, "being prepared," "being served," or, "going on"; for that it was not "ended" is plain from [Joh 13:26](#).

**the devil having now**—or, "already."

**put into the heart of Judas ... to betray him**—referring to the agreement he had *already* made with the chief priests ([Lu 22:3-6](#)).

**3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, &c.**—This verse is very sublime, and as a preface to what follows, were we not familiar with it, would fill us with inexpressible surprise. An unclouded perception of His relation to the Father, the commission He held from Him, and His approaching return to Him, possessed His soul.

**4, 5. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments**—outer garments which would have impeded the operation of washing.

**and took a towel and girded himself**—assuming a servant's dress.

**5. began to wash**—proceeded to wash. *Beyond all doubt the feet of Judas were washed,* as of all the rest.

**6-11. Peter saith ... Lord, dost thou wash my feet?**—Our language cannot bring out the intensely vivid contrast between the "Thou" and the "my," which, by bringing them together, the original expresses, for it is not good English to say, "Lord, *Thou my* feet dost wash?" But *every word* of this question is emphatic. Thus far, and in the question itself, there was nothing but the most profound and beautiful astonishment at a condescension to him quite incomprehensible. Accordingly, though there can be no doubt that already Peter's heart rebelled against it as a thing not to be tolerated, Jesus ministers no rebuke as yet, but only bids him wait a little, and he should understand it all.

**7. Jesus answered and said ... What I do thou knowest not now**—that is, Such condescension *does* need explanation; it *is* fitted to astonish.

**but thou shall know hereafter**—afterwards, meaning *presently*; though viewed as a general maxim, applicable to all dark sayings in God's Word, and dark doings in God's providence, these words are full of consolation.

**8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash, &c.**—more emphatically, "Never shalt Thou wash my feet": that is, "That is an incongruity to which I can never submit." How like the man!

**If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me**—What Peter could not submit to was, that the Master should serve His servant. But *the whole saving work of Christ was one continued series of such services, ending with and consummated by the most self-sacrificing and transcendent of all services: The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but TO MINISTER, AND TO GIVE His life a ransom for many.* (See on [Mr 10:45](#)). If Peter then could not submit to let his Master go down so low as to wash his feet, *how should he suffer himself to be served by Him at all?* This is couched under the one pregnant word "wash," which though applicable to the *lower* operation which Peter resisted, is the familiar scriptural symbol of that *higher* cleansing, which Peter little thought he was at the same time virtually putting from him. *It is not humility to refuse what the Lord deigns to do for us, or to deny what He has done, but it is self-willed presumption—not rare, however, in those inner circles of lofty religious profession and traditional spirituality, which are found wherever Christian truth has enjoyed long and undisturbed possession.* The truest humility is to receive reverentially, and thankfully to own, the gifts of grace.

**9. Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head**—that is, "To be severed from Thee, Lord, is death to me: If that be the meaning of my speech, I tread upon it; and if to be washed of Thee have such significance, then not my feet only, but hands, head, and all, be washed!" This artless expression of clinging, life-and-death attachment to Jesus, and felt dependence upon Him for his whole spiritual well-being, compared with the similar saying in [Joh 6:68, 69](#) (see on [Joh 6:68,69](#)), furnishes such evidence of *historic verity* such as no thoroughly honest mind can resist.

**10. He that is washed**—in this *thorough* sense, to express which the word is carefully changed to one meaning to wash *as in a bath*.

**needeth not**—to be so washed any more.

**save to wash his feet**—needeth to do no more than wash his feet (and here the former word is resumed, meaning to wash *the hands or feet*).

**but is clean every whit**—as a whole. This sentence is singularly instructive. Of the *two cleansings*, the one points to that which takes place at the *commencement* of the Christian life, embracing *complete absolution from sin as a guilty state, and entire deliverance from it as a polluted life* ([Re 1:5](#); [1Co 6:11](#))—or, in the language of theology, *Justification and Regeneration*. This cleansing is effected *once for all*, and is never repeated. The other cleansing, described as that of "the feet," is *such as one walking from a bath quite cleansed still needs,*

*in consequence of his contact with the earth.* (Compare [Ex 30:18, 19](#)). It is the *daily* cleansing which we are taught to seek, when in the spirit of adoption we say, "Our Father which art in heaven ... *forgive us our debts*" ([Mt 6:9, 12](#)); and, when burdened with the sense of manifold shortcomings—as what tender spirit of a Christian is not?—is it not a relief to be permitted thus to wash our feet after a day's contact with the earth? This is not to call in question the completeness of our past justification. Our Lord, while graciously insisting on washing Peter's feet, refuses to extend the cleansing farther, that the symbolical instruction intended to be conveyed might not be marred.

**and ye are clean**—in the first and *whole* sense.

**but not all**—important, as showing that Judas, instead of being as true-hearted a disciple as the rest at first, and merely *falling away* afterwards—as many represent it—*never experienced that cleansing at all which made the others what they were.*

**12-15. Know ye what I have done?**—that is, its intent. The question, however, was put merely to summon their attention to His own answer.

**13. Ye call me Master**—Teacher.

**and Lord**—*learning* of Him in the one capacity, *obeying* Him in the other.

**and ye say well, for so I am**—The conscious dignity with which this claim is made is remarkable, following immediately on His laying aside the towel of service. Yet what is this whole history but a succession of such astonishing contrast from first to last?

**14. If I then**—the Lord.

**have washed your feet**—the servants'.

**ye**—but fellow servants.

**ought to wash one another's feet**—not in the narrow sense of a literal washing, profanely caricatured by popes and emperors, but by the very humblest *real* services one to another.

**16, 17. The servant is not greater than his lord, &c.**—an oft-repeated saying ([Mt 10:24, &c.](#)).

**If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them**—a hint that even among real Christians the *doing* of such things would come lamentably short of the *knowing*.

**18, 19. I speak not of you all**—the "happy *are ye*," of [Joh 13:17](#), being on no supposition applicable to Judas.

**I know whom I have chosen**—in the *higher* sense.

**But that the scripture may be fulfilled**—that is, one has been added to your number, by no accident or mistake, who is none of Mine, but just that he might fulfil his predicted destiny.

**He that eateth bread with me**—"did eat of *my bread*" ([Ps 41:9](#)), as one of My family; admitted to the nearest familiarity of discipleship and of social life.

**hath lifted up his heel against me**—turned upon Me, adding *insult* to injury. (Compare [Heb 10:29](#)). In the Psalm the immediate reference is to Ahithophel's treachery against

David (2Sa 17:1-23), one of those scenes in which the parallel of his story with that of His great Antitype is exceedingly striking. "The eating bread derives a fearful meaning from the participation in the sacramental supper, a meaning which must be applied for ever to all unworthy communicants, as well as to all betrayers of Christ who eat the bread of His Church" (Stier, with whom, and others, we agree in thinking that Judas partook of the Lord's Supper).

**19. I tell you before ... that when it comes to pass, ye may believe**—and it came to pass when they deeply needed such confirmation.

**20. He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me, &c.**—(See on Mt 10:40). The connection here seems to be that despite the dishonor done to Him by Judas, and similar treatment awaiting themselves, they were to be cheered by the assurance that their office, even as His own, was divine.

Joh 13:21-30. The Traitor Indicated—He Leaves the Supper Room.

**21. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, One of you shall betray me**—The announcement of Joh 13:18 seems not to have been plain enough to be quite apprehended, save by the traitor himself. He will therefore speak it out in terms not to be misunderstood. But how much it cost Him to do this, appears from the "trouble" that came over His "spirit"—visible emotion, no doubt—before He got it uttered. What wounded susceptibility does this disclose, and what exquisite delicacy in His social intercourse with the Twelve, to whom He cannot, without an effort, break the subject!

**22. the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake**—Further intensely interesting particulars are given in the other Gospels: (1) "They were exceeding sorrowful" (Mt 26:22). (2) "They began to inquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing" (Lu 22:23). (3) "They began to say unto Him one by one, Is it I, and another, Is it I?" (Mr 14:19). Generous, simple hearts! They abhorred the thought, but, instead of putting it on others, each was only anxious to purge *himself* and know if *he* could be the wretch. Their putting it at once to Jesus Himself, as knowing doubtless who was to do it, was the best, as it certainly was the most spontaneous and artless evidence of their innocence. (4) Jesus, apparently while this questioning was going on, added, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Mt 26:24). (5) "Judas," *last of all*, "answered and said, *Lord, is it I?*" evidently feeling that when all were saying this, if he held his peace, that of itself would draw suspicion upon him. To prevent this the question is wrung out of him, but perhaps, amidst the stir and excitement at the table, in a half-suppressed tone as we are inclined to think the answer also was—"Thou hast said" (Mt 26:25), or possibly by little more than a sign; for from Joh 13:28 it is evident that till the moment when he went out, he was not openly discovered.

**23-26. there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved**—Thus modestly does our Evangelist denote himself, as reclining next to Jesus at the table.

**Peter ... beckoned to him to ask who it should be of whom he spake**—reclining probably at the corresponding place on the other side of Jesus.

**25. He then lying**—rather leaning over on Jesus' bosom.

**saith**—*in a whisper*, "Lord, who is it?"

**26. Jesus answered**—*also inaudibly*, the answer being communicated to Peter perhaps from behind.

**He ... to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it**—a piece of the bread soaked in the wine or the sauce of the dish; one of the ancient ways of testifying peculiar regard; compare [Joh 13:18](#), "*he that eateth bread with Me.*"

**And when he had dipped ... he gave it to Judas, &c.**—Thus the sign of Judas' treachery was an affecting expression, and the last, of the Saviour's wounded love!

**27-30. after the sop Satan entered into him**—Very solemn are these brief hints of the successive steps by which Judas reached the climax of his guilt. "The devil had already put it into his heart to betray his Lord." Yet who can tell what struggles he went through ere he brought himself to carry that suggestion into effect? Even after this, however, his compunctions were not at an end. With the thirty pieces of silver already in his possession, he seems still to have quailed—and can we wonder? When Jesus stooped to wash his feet, it may be the last struggle was reaching its crisis. But that word of the Psalm, about "one that ate of his bread who would lift up his heel against Him" ([Ps 41:9](#)) probably all but turned the dread scale, and the still more explicit announcement, that one of those sitting with Him at the table should betray Him, would beget the thought, "I am detected; it is now too late to draw back." At that moment the sop is given; offer of friendship is once more made—and how affectingly! But already "Satan has *entered into him*," and though the Saviour's act might seem enough to recall him even yet, hell is now in his bosom, and he says within himself, "The die is cast; now let me go through with it"; fear, begone!" (See on [Mt 12:43](#)).

**Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly**—that is, Why linger here? Thy presence is a restraint, and thy work stands still; thou hast the wages of iniquity, go work for it!

**28, 29. no man ... knew for what intent he spake this unto him ... some thought ... Jesus ... said ... But what we need ... or, ... give ... to the poor**—a very important statement, as showing how carefully. Jesus had kept the secret, and Judas his hypocrisy, to the last.

**30. He then, having received the sop, went immediately out**—severing himself *for ever* from that holy society with which he never had any spiritual sympathy.

**and it was night**—but far blacker night in the soul of Judas than in the sky over his head.

[Joh 13:31-38](#). Discourse after the Traitor's Departure—Peter's Self-Confidence—His Fall Predicted.

**31. when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified**—These remarkable words plainly imply that up to this moment our Lord had spoken *under a painful restraint*, the presence of a traitor within the little circle of His holiest fellowship on earth preventing the free and full outpouring of His heart; as is evident, indeed, from those oft-recurring clauses, "Ye are not all clean," "I speak not of you all," &c. "Now" the restraint is removed, and the embankment which kept in the mighty volume of living waters having broken down, they burst forth in a torrent which only ceases on His leaving the supper room and entering on the next stage of His great work—the scene in the Garden. But with what words is the silence first broken on the departure of Judas? By no reflections on the traitor, and, what is still more wonderful, by no reference to the dread character of His own approaching sufferings. He does not even name them, save by announcing, as with a burst of triumph, that the hour of His *glory* has arrived! And what is very remarkable, in five brief clauses He repeats this word "glorify" *five times*, as if to His view a coruscation of glories played at that moment about the Cross. (See on [Joh 12:23](#)).

**God is glorified in him**—the glory of Each reaching its zenith in the Death of the Cross!

**32. If God be glorified in him, God shall also**—in return and reward of this highest of all services ever rendered to Him, or capable of being rendered.

**glorify him in himself, and ... straightway glorify him**—referring now to the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ *after* this service was over, including all the honor and glory then put upon Him, and that will for ever encircle Him as Head of the new creation.

**33-35. Little children**—From the height of His own glory He now descends, with sweet pity, to His "little children," *all now His own*. This term of endearment, nowhere else used in the Gospels, and once only employed by Paul ([Ga 4:19](#)), is appropriated by the beloved disciple himself, who no fewer than seven times employs it in his first Epistle.

**Ye shall seek me**—feel the want of Me.

**as I said to the Jews**—([Joh 7:34](#); [8:21](#)). But oh in what a different sense!

**34. a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another**—This was the *new* feature of it. Christ's love to His people in giving His life a ransom for them was altogether new, and consequently as a Model and Standard for theirs to one another. It is not, however, something transcending the great moral law, which is "the *old* commandment" ([1Jo 2:7](#), and see on [Mr 12:28-33](#)), but that law *in a new and peculiar form*. Hence it is said to be both *new* and *old* ([1Jo 2:7, 8](#)).

**35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples**—the disciples of Him who laid down His life for those He loved.

**if ye have love one to another**—for My sake, and as one in Me; for to *such* love men outside the circle of believers know right well they are entire strangers. Alas, how little of it there is even within this circle!

**36-38. Peter said**—seeing plainly in these directions how to behave themselves, that He was indeed going from them.

**Lord, whither guest thou?**—having hardly a glimmer of the real truth.

**Jesus answered, ... thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards**—How different from what He said to the Jews: "Whither I go *ye cannot come*" ([Joh 8:21](#)).

**37. why not ... now? I will lay down my life for thy sake**—He seems now to see that it was *death* Christ referred to as what would sever Him from them, but is not staggered at following Him thither. Jesus answered,

**38. Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?**—In this repetition of Peter's words there is deep though affectionate irony, and this Peter himself would feel for many a day after his recovery, as he retraced the painful particulars.

**Verily ... The cock, &c.**—See on [Lu 22:31-34](#).

## CHAPTER 14

[Joh 14:1-31](#). Discourse at the Table, after Supper.

We now come to that portion of the evangelical history which we may with propriety call its *Holy of Holies*. Our Evangelist, like a consecrated priest, alone opens up to us the view into this sanctuary. It is the record of the last moments spent by the Lord in the midst of His disciples before His passion, when words full of heavenly thought flowed from His sacred lips. All that His heart, glowing with love, had still to say to His friends, was compressed into this short season. At first (from [Joh 13:31](#)) the intercourse took the form of conversation; sitting at table, they talked familiarly together. But when ([Joh 14:31](#)) the repast was finished, the language of Christ assumed a loftier strain; the disciples, assembled around their Master, listened to the words of life, and seldom spoke a word (only [Joh 16:17, 29](#)). "At length, in the Redeemer's sublime intercessory prayer, His full soul was poured forth in express petitions to His heavenly Father on behalf of those who were His own. It is a peculiarity of these last chapters, that they treat almost exclusively of the most profound relations—as that of the Son to the Father, and of both to the Spirit, that of Christ to the Church, of the Church to the world, and so forth. Moreover, a considerable portion of these sublime communications surpassed the point of view to which the disciples had at that time attained; hence the Redeemer frequently repeats the same sentiments in order to impress them more deeply upon their minds, and, because of what they still did not understand, points them to the Holy Spirit, who would remind them of all His sayings, and lead them into all truth ([Joh 14:26](#))" [Olshausen].

**1. Let not your heart be troubled, &c.**—What myriads of souls have not these opening words cheered, in deepest gloom, since first they were uttered!

**ye believe in God**—absolutely.

**believe also in me**—that is, Have the *same trust* in Me. What less, and what else, can these words mean? And if so, what a demand to make by one sitting familiarly with them at the supper table! Compare the saying in [Joh 5:17](#), for which the Jews took up stones to stone Him, as "making himself equal with God" ([Joh 14:18](#)). But it is no *transfer of our trust from its proper Object*; it is but *the concentration of our trust in the Unseen and Impalpable One upon His Own Incarnate Son*, by which that trust, instead of the distant, unsteady, and too often cold and scarce real thing it otherwise is, acquires a conscious reality, warmth, and power, which makes all things new. *This is Christianity in brief.*

**2. In my Father's house are many mansions**—and so room for all, and a place for each.

**if not, I would have told you**—that is, I would tell you so at once; I would not deceive you.

**I go to prepare a place for you**—to obtain for you a right to be there, and to possess your "place."

**3. I will come again and receive you unto myself**—*strictly*, at His Personal appearing; but in a secondary and comforting sense, to each individually. Mark again the claim made:—to come again to receive His people *to Himself*, that where *He* is there they may be also. *He thinks it ought to be enough to be assured that they shall be where He is and in His keeping.*

**4-7. whither I go ye know ... Thomas saith, Lord, we know not whither thou guest ... Jesus saith, I am the way, &c.**—By saying this, He meant rather to draw out their inquiries and reply to them. Christ is "THE Way" to the Father—"no man cometh unto the Father but by Me"; He is "THE Truth" of all we find in the Father when we get to Him, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" ([Col 2:9](#)), and He is all "THE Life" that shall ever flow to us and bless us from the Godhead thus approached and thus manifested in Him—"this is the true God and eternal life" ([1Jo 5:20](#)).

**7. from henceforth**—now, or from this time, understand.

**8-12.** The substance of this passage is that the Son is the ordained and perfect manifestation of the Father, that His own word for this ought to His disciples to be enough; that if any doubts remained His works ought to remove them (see on [Joh 10:37](#)); but yet that these works of His were designed merely to aid weak faith, and would be repeated, nay exceeded, by His disciples, in virtue of the power He would confer on them after His departure. His miracles the apostles wrought, though wholly in His name and by His power, and the "greater" works—not in degree but in kind—were the conversion of thousands in a day, by His Spirit accompanying them.

**13, 14. whatsoever ye ... ask in my name**—as Mediator.

**that will I do**—as Head and Lord of the kingdom of God. This comprehensive promise is emphatically repeated in [Joh 14:14](#).

**15-17. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, &c.**—This connection seems designed to teach that the proper temple for the indwelling Spirit of Jesus is a heart filled with that love to Him which lives actively for Him, and so this was the fitting preparation for the promised gift.

**he shall give you another Comforter**—a word used only by John; in his *Gospel* with reference to the Holy Spirit, in his *First Epistle* ([1Jo 2:1](#)), with reference to Christ Himself. Its proper sense is an "advocate," "patron," "helper." In this sense it is plainly meant of Christ ([1Jo 2:1](#)), and in this sense it comprehends all the *comfort* as well as *aid* of the Spirit's work. The Spirit is here promised as One who would *supply Christ's own place* in His absence.

**that he may abide with you for ever**—never go away, as Jesus was going to do in the body.

**17. whom the world cannot receive, &c.**—(See [1Co 2:14](#)).

**he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you**—Though the proper fulness of both these was yet future, our Lord, by using both the present and the future, seems plainly to say that they *already* had the germ of this great blessing.

**18-20. I will not leave you comfortless**—in a bereaved and desolate condition; or (as in *Margin*) "orphans."

**I will come to you**—"I come" or "am coming" to you; that is, plainly *by the Spirit*, since it was to make His departure to be *no bereavement*.

**19. world seeth**—beholdeth.

**me no more, but ye see**—behold.

**me**—His bodily presence, being all the sight of Him which "the world" ever had, or was capable of, it "beheld Him no more" after His departure to the Father; but by the coming of the Spirit, the presence of Christ was not only *continued* to His spiritually enlightened disciples, but rendered *far more efficacious and blissful* than His bodily presence had been before the Spirit's coming.

**because I live**—not "*shall* live," only when raised from the dead; for it is His unextinguishable, divine life of which He speaks, in view of which His *death and resurrection* were but as shadows passing over the sun's glorious disk. (Compare [Lu 24:5](#); [Re 1:18](#), "the Living One"). And this grand saying Jesus uttered *with death immediately in view*. What a brightness does this throw over the next clause, "ye shall live also!" "Knowest thou not," said Luther to the King of Terrors, "that thou didst devour the Lord Christ, but wert obliged to give Him back, and wert devoured of Him? So thou must leave me undevoured because I abide in Him, and live and suffer for His name's sake. Men may hunt me out of the world—that I care not for—but I shall not on that account abide in death. I shall live with my Lord Christ, since I know and believe that *He liveth!*" (quoted in Stier).

**20. At that day**—of the Spirit's coming.

**ye shall know that I am in my Father, ye in me, I in you**—(See on [Joh 17:22,23](#)).

**21. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, &c.**—(See on [Joh 14:15](#)).

**my Father and I will love him**—Mark the sharp line of distinction here, not only between the Divine Persons but the actings of love in Each respectively, towards true disciples.

**22. Judas saith ... not Iscariot**—Beautiful parenthesis this! The traitor being no longer present, we needed not to be told that this question came not from *him*. But it is as if the Evangelist had said, "A very different Judas from the traitor, and a very different question from any that he would have put. Indeed [as one in Stier says], we never read of Iscariot that he entered in any way into his Master's words, or ever put a question even of rash curiosity (though it may be he did, but that nothing from *him* was deemed fit for immortality in the Gospels but his name and treason)."

**how ... manifest thyself to us, and not to the world**—a most natural and proper question, founded on [Joh 14:19](#), though interpreters speak against it as *Jewish*.

**23. we will come and make our abode with him**—Astonishing statement! In the Father's "coming" He "refers to the revelation of Him *as a Father* to the soul, which does not take place till the Spirit comes into the heart, teaching it to cry, *Abba, Father*" [Olshausen]. The "abode" means a permanent, eternal stay! (Compare [Le 26:11, 12](#); [Eze 37:26, 27](#); [2Co 6:16](#); and *contrast Jer 14:8*).

**25, 26. he shall teach you all things, and bring all to ... remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you**—(See on [Joh 14:15](#); [Joh 14:17](#)). As the Son came in *the Father's* name, so the Father shall send the Spirit *in My name*, says Jesus, that is, with like divine *power* and *authority* to reproduce in their souls what Christ taught them, "bringing to living consciousness what lay like slumbering germs in their minds" [Olshausen]. *On this rests the credibility and ultimate divine authority of THE Gospel history*. The whole of what is here said of THE Spirit is decisive of His divine *personality*. "He who can regard all the *personal* expressions, applied to the Spirit in these three chapters ('teaching,' 'reminding,' 'testifying,' 'coming,' 'convincing,' 'guiding,' 'speaking,' 'hearing,' 'prophesying,' 'taking') as being no other than a long drawn-out figure, deserves not to be recognized even as an interpreter of intelligible words, much less an expositor of Holy Scripture" [Stier].

**27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you**—If [Joh 14:25, 26](#) sounded like a note of preparation for drawing the discourse to a close, this would sound like a farewell. But oh, how different from ordinary adieus! It *is* a parting word, but of richest import, the customary "peace" of a parting friend sublimed and transfigured. As "the Prince of Peace" ([Isa 9:6](#)) He brought it into flesh, carried it about in His Own Person ("My peace") died to make it ours, left it as the heritage of His disciples upon earth, implants and maintains it by His Spirit in their hearts. Many a legacy is "left" that is never "given" to the legatee, many a gift destined that never reaches its proper object. But Christ is the Executor of His own Testament; the peace He "*leaves*" He "*gives*"; Thus all is secure.

**not as the world giveth**—in contrast with the world, He gives *sincerely, substantially, eternally*.

**28. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I**—These words, which Arians and Socinians perpetually quote as triumphant evidence against the proper Divinity of Christ, really yield no intelligible sense on their principles. Were a holy *man* on his deathbed, beholding his friends in tears at the prospect of losing him, to say, "Ye ought rather to joy than weep for me, and would if ye really loved me, "the speech would be quite natural. But if they should ask him, *why* joy at his departure was more suitable than sorrow, would they not start back with astonishment, if not horror, were he to reply, "*Because my Father is greater than I?*" Does not this strange speech from Christ's lips, then, *presuppose such teaching* on His part as would make it extremely difficult for them to think He could gain anything by departing to the Father, and make it necessary for Him to say expressly that there was a sense in which He *could* do so?

Thus, this startling explanation seems plainly intended to correct such misapprehensions as might arise from the emphatic and reiterated teaching of *His proper equality with the Father*—as if so Exalted a Person were incapable of any accession by transition from this dismal scene to a cloudless heaven and the very bosom of the Father—and by assuring them that this was *not* the case, to make them forget their own sorrow in His approaching joy.

**30, 31. Hereafter I will not talk much with you**—"I have a little more to say, but My work hastens apace, and the approach of the adversary will cut it short."

**for the prince of this world**—(See on [Joh 12:31](#)).

**cometh**—with hostile intent, for a last grand attack, having failed in His first formidable assault ([Lu 4:1-13](#)) from which he "departed [only] *for a season*" ([Joh 14:13](#)).

**and hath nothing in me**—*nothing of His own—nothing to fasten on*. Glorious saying! The *truth* of it is, that which makes the Person and Work of Christ the life of the world ([Heb 9:14](#); [1Jo 3:5](#); [2Co 5:21](#)).

**31. But that the world may know that I love the Father, &c.**—The sense must be completed thus: "But to the Prince of the world, though he has nothing in Me, I shall yield Myself up even unto death, that the world may know that I love and obey the Father, whose commandment it is that I give My life a ransom for many."

**Arise, let us go hence**—Did they then, at this stage of the discourse, leave the supper room, as some able interpreters conclude? If so, we think our Evangelist would have mentioned it: see [Joh 18:1](#), which seems clearly to intimate that they then only left the upper room. But what do the words mean if not this? We think it was the dictate of that saying of earlier date, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and *how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*"—a spontaneous and irrepressible expression of the deep eagerness of His spirit to get into the conflict, and that if, as is likely, it was responded to somewhat too literally by the guests who hung on His lips, in the way of a movement to depart, a wave of His hand, would be enough to show that He had yet more to say ere they broke up; and that disciple, whose pen was dipped in a love to his Master which made *their* movements of small consequence save when essential to the illustration of *His* words, would record this little outburst of the Lamb hastening to the slaughter, in the very midst of His lofty discourse; while the effect of it, if any, upon His hearers, as of no consequence, would naturally enough be passed over.

## CHAPTER 15

[Joh 15:1-27](#). Discourse at the Supper Table Continued.

**1-8.** *The spiritual oneness of Christ and His people, and His relation to them as the Source of all their spiritual life and fruitfulness*, are here beautifully set forth by a figure familiar to Jewish ears ([Isa 5:1](#), &c.).

**I am the true vine**—of whom the vine of *nature* is but a shadow.

**my Father is the husbandman**—the great Proprietor of the vineyard, the Lord of the spiritual kingdom. (It is surely unnecessary to point out the claim to *supreme divinity* involved in this).

**2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit ... every branch that beareth fruit**—As in a fruit tree, some branches may be *fruitful*, others quite *barren*, according as there is a *vital connection* between the branch and the stock, or *no vital connection*; so the disciples of Christ may be spiritually fruitful or the reverse, according as they are *vitally* and *spiritually connected* with Christ, or but *externally* and *mechanically attached* to Him. The fruitless He "taketh away" (see on [Joh 15:6](#)); the fruitful He "purgeth" (cleanseth, pruneth)—*stripping it*, as the husbandman does, *of what is rank* ([Mr 4:19](#)), "that it may bring forth more fruit"; a process often painful, but no less needful and beneficial than in the natural husbandry.

**3. Now**—rather, "Already."

**ye are clean through**—by reason of.

**the word I have spoken to you**—already in a purified, fruitful condition, in consequence of the long action upon them of that searching "word" which was "as a refiner's fire" ([Mal 3:2, 3](#)).

**4. Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, &c.**—As all spiritual fruitfulness had been ascribed to the mutual *inhabitation*, and living, active *interpenetration* (so to speak) of Christ and His disciples, so here the keeping up of this vital connection is made essential to continued fruitfulness.

**5. without me**—apart, or vitally disconnected from Me.

**ye can do nothing**—spiritually, acceptably.

**6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch ... withered ... cast into the fire ... burned**—The one proper use of the vine is to *bear fruit*; failing this, it is good for one other thing—*fuel*. (See [Eze 15:1-5](#)). How awfully striking the figure, in this view of it!

**7. If ye abide in me, and my words ... in you**—Mark the change from the inhabitation of *Himself* to that of His *words*, paving the way for the subsequent exhortations ([Joh 15:9, 10](#)).

**ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**—because this indwelling of His words in them would secure the harmony of their askings with the divine will.

**8. glorified that ye bear much fruit**—not only from His delight in it for its own sake, but as from "the juices of the Living Vine."

**so shall ye be my disciples**—*evidence* your discipleship.

**9-11. continue ye in my love**—not, "Continue to love Me," but, "Continue in the possession and enjoyment of My love to you"; as is evident from the next words.

**10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love**—the obedient spirit of true discipleship cherishing and attracting the continuance and increase of Christ's love; and this, He adds, was the secret even of His own abiding in His Father's love!

**12-16. That ye love one another, &c.**—(See on [Joh 13:34, 35](#)).

**13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends**—The emphasis lies not on "friends," but on "*laying down his life*" for them; that is, "One can show no greater regard for those dear to him than to give his life for them, and this is the love ye shall find in Me."

**14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**—hold yourselves in absolute subjection to Me.

**15. Henceforth I call you not servants**—that is, *in the sense explained* in the next words; for servants He still calls them ([Joh 15:20](#)), and they delight to call themselves so, in the sense of being "under law to Christ" ([1Co 9:20](#)).

**the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth**—knows nothing of his master's *plans* and *reasons*, but simply receives and executes his orders.

**but ... friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you**—admitted you to free, unrestrained fellowship, keeping back nothing from you which I have received to communicate. (Compare [Ge 18:17](#); [Ps 25:14](#); [Isa 50:4](#)).

**16. Ye have not chosen me, but I ... you**—a wholesale memento after the lofty things He had just said about their mutual indwelling, and the unreservedness of the friendship they had been admitted to.

**ordained**—appointed.

**you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit**—that is, give yourselves to it.

**and that your fruit should remain**—showing itself to be an imperishable and ever growing principle. (Compare [Pr 4:18](#); [2Jo 8](#)).

**that whatsoever ye shall ask, &c.**—(See on [Joh 15:7](#)).

**17-21.** The substance of these important verses has occurred more than once before. (See on [Mt 10:34-36](#); [Lu 12:49-53](#), &c.).

**22-25.** (See on [Joh 9:39-41](#)).

**If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin**—*comparatively* none; all other sins being light compared with the rejection of the Son of God.

**now they have no cloak for their sin**—rather, "pretext."

**24. If I had not done ... the works which none other ... did**—(See on [Joh 12:37](#)).

**25. that the word might be fulfilled ... They hated me without a cause**—quoted from the Messianic [Ps 69:4](#), applied also in the same sense in [Joh 2:17](#); [Ac 1:20](#); [Ro 11:9, 10](#); [15:3](#).