

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_rande_01.php

BAPTIST REVIEW AND EXPOSITOR

Vol. III.

April, 1906.

No. 2.

A STUDY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

BY PROFESSOR HENRY C. VEDDER, D.D., CROZER THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

To master any piece of literature, no single method of study suffices. At least two methods must be pursued, neither to the exclusion of the other, since they are complementary. One is to study the whole in the light of the details—a method commonly called exegesis. The other is to study the details in the light of the whole, and is often called exposition. It is perhaps a matter of no great importance which method is first employed, provided the other is not neglected; for there can be no accurate exposition without careful exegesis, nor truthful exegesis without thorough exposition.

This study of the Fourth Gospel is avowedly expository. Let us at the outset brush aside all questions regarding authorship, time and place of composition, and the like—not contemptuously, as things of no importance, but as irrelevant to our present purpose. That purpose is simply to inquire, What does this Gospel tell, and why? Here is a piece of literature. Somebody wrote it. Let us give him the traditional name of John, and seek to discover his purpose and message. For that the book, in its present form, is the product of a single mind, and was composed with a definite purpose, can be doubted by no reader who has any competence for literary criticism.

What does this Gospel tell? The theme is announced in the opening sentences to be the Word; the Word that was with God in the beginning, and that was God; the

Word through whom all things were made; the Word that is the Light of men; the Word that was made flesh and tented among us, in order that he might declare to men the invisible God. There is no need of a wearisome and bewildering discussion of the Logos-doctrine of Philo, and what John may have borrowed from Alexandrine thought, and for this reason: In spite of the library of learned nonsense, and the modicum of learned sense, that has been written on this subject, it is by no means certain that John had ever heard of Philo and the Alexandrine philosophy. There is no conclusive evidence that he either knew or cared anything about the speculations of Neo-Platonism. His use of the term Logos, or Word, to describe the pre-existent Christ might well have been quite independent of any philosophic speculations. It is a metaphor that might suggest itself to any thoughtful man. A man's word is that by which he communicates himself to others; it is the expression, the revelation, of his thought, feeling, will. A man's word is the man himself. So the Word of God is God, and at the same time he is the revelation of God's will, feeling, thought. The Word is God in creative energy; he is God coming into relation with the world he has made; he is Light, he is Life, he is Truth. And the complete revelation of God to man was attained when the Word became flesh and lived the life of a man, under human conditions and limitations. "No one has ever seen God—God only-begotten, he that is in the bosom of the Father, he declared him." This does not mean that the Word was transformed into man, the divine into the human; nor that the divine became contracted to the limits of the human and so was indistinguishable from it; but that the Word assumed human nature—became mysteriously, yet really and indissolubly, united to a human spirit, clothed with a human body—so that in Jesus of Nazareth men beheld God manifest in the flesh.

The Fourth Gospel is, therefore the Gospel of the Incarnation. And the fact of the incarnation is thus made

primal, central, not for any dogmatic reasons, but to impress duly upon us the lesson of that incarnation: By assuming man's nature, the Word has identified himself with man's state, obligated himself to share man's burdens, to bear man's penalty. Those who come into fellowship with him enter upon the same path of lowly service and vicarious suffering. The same mind must be in them that was in the Word, who emptied himself of his divine glory and power, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death.

This is the Gospel of the Incarnation, not only in that it reveals the wondrous fact of the Word becoming flesh, but because it describes in detail the earthly life of the incarnate Word. That life is briefly characterized in 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and tented among us, full of grace and truth; and we beheld his glory—glory as of One Only-begotten from the Father." The entire Gospel is an expansion of that sentence. The earthly life of the Word is said to have been "full of grace and truth"—"grace," the spiritual condition of one in whom God dwells, and who is therefore completely governed by the divine will and is in full accord with the divine character; "truth," exact outward correspondence in word and deed to a perfect character, which exists in God himself chiefly, and in all God's servants according to the measure of their fellowship with him. Accordingly, in Jesus Christ men beheld "glory, as of One Only-begotten from the Father"—a unique and absolutely perfect excellence, a being not only without sin (that would be merely negative) but possessing and manifesting all those attributes of personal character that we associate with God himself. To justify this description of the historic Christ is the aim of the Gospel.

Two other and minor aspects of the earthly life of the Word are set forth in the Prologue:

1. He came to his own (Israel), the chosen people of God, and they did not receive him (i. 11). This prepares us for the details of Christ's rejection by the official heads

of the nation, the chief priests and Sanhedrin; by their recognized religious teachers, the scribes; and by the exponents of their highest type of piety, the Pharisees. It prepares us also to find that the scene of the Gospel is mainly Jerusalem, where alone this appeal to the nation's representatives could fitly be made.

2. But some received him, both of his own people and of the Gentiles, and to such he gave power to become children of God, for in him was Life (i. 12, 4). We may therefore expect to find this side of the ministry of the incarnate Word fully set forth.

This is what the Gospel has to tell. The purpose of the writer in telling it he has himself explicitly declared: "These things have been written that you may believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." The author did not set out to write a biography, but a Gospel. He was convinced, however, that he could best accomplish his purpose of securing belief on the part of his readers by telling how Jesus Christ had manifested his uniquely perfect character—that to relate those things in the life of Jesus which had elicited faith in those who saw and heard would elicit like faith in those who read. Those who have eyes to see would behold the beauty, the majesty, the perfection of his character; they would believe and receive life.

This purpose of the author is told in several different ways. "I have been born for this," said Jesus to Pilate, "and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth"—the truth, namely, that he was King, Messiah, Son of God (xix. 37). The mission of Christ is thus defined by himself to have been essentially that of testimony, witness-bearing, the declaring of God to man. In the Prologue also this word is found, and further study shows it to be the key-word of the Gospel: *μαρτυρία*, testimony.* Either as noun or as verb this word is in

*One other word of frequent occurrence in this Gospel, though by no means unique, is *σημειον*, sign, the visible way in which the witness is borne.

constant use, while it is of rare occurrence in the other Gospels. John the Baptist came into the world to bear witness to the Light, to give his testimony to the Messianic office and character of Jesus. The Word became flesh that he might become God's witness, declare God to men. The book was written in testimony to the words and work of Jesus, that men might believe him to be the Christ, the Son of God.

To sum up: as to substance, this is the Gospel of the Incarnation; as to form, this is the Gospel of Testimonies.

As to literary form, the Fourth Gospel is the most regular, the most artificial (in the good sense of that word) of the four Gospels. Its structure or plan is simple and easily seen, and is striking because of its symmetry. Certain numbers—three, seven, ten, twelve—had a special religious significance in the mind of a Jew, and the number seven seems to have had a peculiar attraction for John. The contents of his book are arranged in three main divisions (there is probably no significance in the number three), each of which is subdivided into seven heads or sections, as will appear from the following.

ANALYSIS.

Prologue, i. 1-18.

I. Testimonies and Manifestations of the Early Ministry.

1. Testimony of John and his disciples, i. 19-51.
2. First "sign" at Cana, ii. 1-12.
3. Cleansing of the Temple, ii. 13-25.
4. Conversation with Nicodemus, iii. 1-21.
5. Second testimony of John iii. 22-36.
6. Jesus manifests himself in Samaria, iv. 1-42.
7. Second "sign" at Cana, iv. 43-54.

II. Testimonies and Manifestations to the Jewish Nation.

1. Healing of the lame man, v. 1-47.
2. Feeding of the five thousand, vi. 1-71.
3. Jesus at the Feast of Booths, vii. 1-viii. 59.
4. Healing of man born blind, ix. 1-x. 21.
5. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication, x. 22-39.
6. Raising of Lazarus, x. 30-xi. 54.
7. Jesus publicly assumes title of Messiah, xi. 55-xii. 50.

III. Manifestations and Testimonies of the Last Days.

1. Jesus manifests himself at the Supper, xiii. 1-30.
 2. Last Discourses to his Disciples—the coming of the Comforter, xiii. 31-xiv. 31.
 3. Discourse continued—Union with Christ, xv., xvi.
 4. The Prayer of Jesus, xvii.
 5. The arrest and trial, xviii. 1-xix. 16.
 6. The Crucifixion and death, xix. 17-42.
 7. The Resurrection, xx.
- Epilogue, xxi.

I.

First of all, then, we have a group of seven events, conceived either as testimonies borne to the divine Sonship and Messianic mission of Jesus, or as manifestations of his "glory," his uniquely perfect character, in the earlier part of his ministry. The Gospel begins (i. 19) almost as abruptly as the Gospel of Mark, with the testimony of John the Baptist and certain of his disciples. Knowledge of the preliminary work of John, and its results among the Jewish people, is assumed by the author. This work has created such a stir that the national authorities can no longer ignore it. They send a deputation to John, who demand from him an account of himself and a declara-

tion of his authority. He frankly confesses that he is not the Christ, but only his forerunner; but to their demand for his credentials he gives what must have seemed to them a vague and enigmatic, if not evasive, reply.

On the very next day (if we are to construe literally this note of time) the Baptist bears public testimony to the Messianic character and divine Sonship of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus we must understand from i. 32-34 to have previously occurred, but though John at that time recognized the Messiah in Jesus he had not then opportunity to bear his testimony. He now announces that he has beheld the divinely appointed sign of the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove and remaining on him, and by this he knows Jesus for the Lamb of God, for him who should baptize in the Holy Spirit. But this was to John more than a mere sign of identity: he recognizes and testifies that in this descent of the Spirit Jesus had received the reality of which the holy oil was but a symbol, and was now become the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. With this formal public attestation of his official character, Jesus begins his ministry.

With John on that day are two disciples who are, like him, waiting and watching for the coming of the promised Deliverer. Hearing the words of their master they follow Jesus, and at his invitation spend the rest of the day with him. What a day of days it was to them! How every incident of it must have remained photographed upon their memories to their latest breath. From that interview they are the devoted followers of Jesus—they become his disciples as they had been John's.

One of these men was Andrew; the other, unnamed—who can he be but the author himself? Andrew, in his new enthusiasm, goes in search of his brother Simon, bursts upon him with these words, "We have found the Messiah," and brings him forthwith to his new found Master and Teacher. Jesus, who needed not to be told what was in any man, beheld in Simon not only the man

he was—impulsive, headstrong, fickle, a strange compound of bravery and cowardice—but the man he would become by God's grace—the leader, the pillar, the tower of strength to his brethren and their common cause—and gives him a new name, expressive of this new character, Kephas, Peter, Rock.

The next day Philip is called to be a disciple, and at once accepting the invitation goes to his friend, Nathanael, the Israelite in whom there was no deceit, who, though doubtful at first, is persuaded to see Jesus, and recognizes him for what he is. Though we are not told this in so many words, we may be sure that John would not be long in finding his brother James, and with him six of those who are to be the Twelve closest disciples have already heard and answered their call. These instances illustrate, and were probably recorded to illustrate, the eagerness with which a select few choice souls, who were prepared by previous spiritual experiences to understand Christ, instinctively perceived his unique character and mission, joyfully welcomed him as one to whom they were drawn by irresistible affinity, and confessed with Nathanael, "Teacher, you are the Son of God, you are King of Israel."

The author now goes on to relate the first public manifestation of his "glory" by Jesus—the first "sign" to the world of his character and office—the miracle of turning water into wine at Cana. What the effect upon the guests may have been we can guess, but we are not told; what we are told is that his disciples were led by this manifestation of himself to give him their whole trust. They had already recognized his exalted character from his words to them; this deed confirms their intuitions. It shows Jesus, as the Christ of God, to be the source of life, King of the physical world as of the spiritual, as far above men in power as he is in character and dignity.

After a brief stay at Capernaum, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. This ministry in Galilee John passes over in almost complete silence, not because it was in his view

unimportant, not because it is fully described in the other Gospels and so need not be told again, but because it is not germane to his purpose. He has set out to tell the story of Christ's appeal to the Jewish nation, and his rejection by its official and spiritual heads. For the same reason he tells us of but one incident of this visit to Jerusalem—the one that exactly fits his theme and purpose. Jesus goes to the Temple; he is outraged by the flagrant abuses that have grown up; before his authoritative manner, before his flaming indignation, the conscience-stricken brokers and dealers flee in dismay. This assumption of authority, this manifestation of moral power, were strictly appropriate for the Messiah, and were a tacit assertion of his official dignity. It was so understood by priests and Sanhedrin—for by "the Jews" John always means either these official representatives of the nation, or their unofficial religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees—and they instinctively assume a hostile attitude to this new prophet and teacher. They demand of him a "sign," that he shall work a miracle to attest his right to such exercise of authority. Jesus refused then, as always, to perform a miracle for the convincing of the hostile or incredulous. Nor will he explicitly declare himself to be the Messiah, and thus precipitate the fate that is finally to overtake him.

Though no other acts of Jesus during this visit are narrated, it is easy to gather that John is not silent because there was nothing more to tell. Other "signs" that Jesus did are mentioned, and the fact is recorded that many believed on him at this time—which things show that his ministry here was of some duration and included both teaching and miracles. That he made a profound impression in Jerusalem, both upon the people at large and upon their leaders, is evident. At least one of the leaders was favorably impressed by the teaching of Jesus and desired to know more about him, and accordingly came to him for a private, personal conference. His coming by night may have been due in part to a pru-

dent wish to avoid comment—he was not yet an avowed disciple, and may not have wished to identify himself too closely with a teacher already under suspicion of the authorities. Quite as probable is the conjecture that he came by night, because Jesus was thronged all day by the people, and night offered the only opportunity for a private and prolonged conversation, such as he desired. To Nicodemus Jesus imparts two principles fundamental in his teaching: First, that his kingdom is spiritual and consequently natural birth gives no one entrance into this kingdom. Jew as well as Gentile must undergo a profound spiritual change before he can become a subject of the King. And secondly, he makes clear his atoning work, his redemptive mission. Because his sacrifice was so immeasurable, his exaltation is so matchless—the way of lowliness, of service, of death, is the way of greatness, of glory, in his kingdom.

While we have no definite information regarding the length of this stay at Jerusalem, we may plausibly guess that it was not more than a few weeks at most. It must have created great excitement, and even exposed Jesus to the danger of immediate arrest. We may read these things between the lines, as the reason for his going into the rural districts, where there would be less excitement and danger of interference. He continues to teach and make disciples. His success was so great that the jealousy of certain disciples of the Baptist was roused; they come to their Master complaining that he is in danger of eclipse. John again bears most emphatic testimony that Jesus is the Christ, of whom he has claimed to be only the forerunner. There is no room for jealousy in the great heart of the Baptist; he knows that his work is nearly done. Henceforth he must decrease and Jesus must increase, and he rejoices that such is the case.*

The Pharisees continue their opposition, and Jesus

*The paragraph iii, 31-36 is probably to be regarded as an interruption of the narrative, and a comment by the author, not as a part of the words of the Baptist—though this is not altogether certain.

thinks it the part of prudence to leave Judea for a time. On the journey, at Jacob's well, he meets a Samaritan woman and converses at length with her. Three principal themes are found in this discourse: (1) Jesus declares himself to be the Water of Life, the source of spiritual power; (2) he makes clear the nature of genuine worship, that its essence is not in time or place or ritual, but in the relation of man's spirit to God, who is Spirit; (3) he first explicitly declares himself to be the Messiah. What he would not tell to hostile unbelief at Jerusalem he discloses to simple faith in Sychar. For several days he tarries in the town, and many believe on him there. It is easy to see why John relates this episode: it is, in some respects, the most striking of all the manifestations of the "glory" of Jesus. A hated Jew, the power of his character and teaching are so convincing that multitudes give him their entire trust. There could be no more emphatic contrast between the faith of these Samaritans and the unbelief and rejection of the Jews. To make that contrast as vivid as possible is the writer's evident object.

Which ought a religious teacher to regard as the greater failure—to elicit no faith from a part of his hearers, or to rouse a wrong kind of faith in another part? In Judea, in spite of having created a great *furor*, Jesus had on the whole been coldly received, suspected, rejected; in Galilee men received him favorably because they had heard of his signs and wonders at Jerusalem. Only in Samaria did his message find a ready acceptance for its own sake, for its intrinsic worth. It is perhaps because of this attitude on the part of the men of Galilee that John elects to tell but one incident of the early ministry there. He evidently chose this one, not because it was not told in the earlier Gospels, but because it was a striking manifestation of the "glory" of Jesus, inasmuch as it called forth faith of a peculiar quality, such as he did not often find in Galilee or elsewhere. It was natural that this royal officer should seek Jesus—a journey of twenty miles or so—a father in such case will leave noth-

ing untried. What was not to be expected was the officer's instant and entire confidence in the mere word of Jesus, a confidence that next day he found to be fully justified. Such faith was peculiarly grateful to Jesus. Every man would rather be valued for what he is than for what he can bestow. The faith that sees in Jesus the chiefest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely, is surely dearer to him now, in his exaltation, than the faith that sees in him only the most willing and bountiful of givers—though he may not repudiate the latter sort of faith, and may honor it more that it deserves. In his first "sign" at Cana, Jesus had shown himself lord of the forces of nature that minister to the needs of man. Now he shows that his lordship is such that he can heal disease. But who can do this except one that has power also to minister to minds diseased, to heal sickness of soul as well as of body?

II.

Here, with the second main division of the Gospel, begins a series of seven distinct and direct appeals to the representatives of the Jewish nation, all but one of which are made in Jerusalem. These appeals are arranged in a rising scale, a *crescendo* of interest and power. Four of them have their starting-point in the performance of a notable miracle, or "sign," and in each case the miracle is followed by an address or sermon.

The first of the incidents is the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. His lameness had been caused by sin; the man had become hopeless of cure. What a type of sin and its results! for sin is paralysis, sin is the maiming of all our powers, sin is a hopeless condition apart from divine healing. This healing, which took place during an unnamed feast, was a sign of undeniable power, but nevertheless gave occasion for a charge by the Pharisees that Jesus had violated the Sabbath. We see how rapidly unbelief hardens into opposition. In his dis-

course, Jesus shows how absurd the charge of sacrilege really is, but this only in passing; his main purpose is to announce his divine Sonship and the proofs by which his mission is authenticated. The Jews rightly understood him to claim equality with God, as his real ground of justification in the course he was pursuing. His mission, he declares, is to honor the Father by doing his works. God is the source of Life, but he has given to the Son power to make alive. God is Judge, but he has committed all judgment to the Son. This is not inconsistent with the declarations of Jesus elsewhere (iii. 17; viii. 15) that he did not come into the world to judge the world. All hearing of the gospel is necessarily a judgment; men either accept the truth and find life or they reject it and continue in death. A testing, winnowing, self-judgment of hearers is inseparable from the teaching of truth. In short, the Son is the revelation of the Father, he has come into the world to declare God to man. This mission is authenticated by three lines of proof: (1) the testimony of John; (2) the testimony of the works; (3) the testimony of the Scriptures. If they really believed Moses and the prophets they would believe Him; their rejection of Him proves that they did not really believe Moses or understand the Scriptures. They could not believe Jesus because their ideals were earthly, as they showed by preferring the applause of men to the honor of God.

It was desirable that at least one appeal should be made to the Pharisees and leaders of Galilee. The second notable miracle, the feeding of five thousand, was made the occasion of such an appeal. In the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus delivered a long discourse, in which he explained the spiritual significance of that miracle, and made clear the manward aspect of his mission. He had come into the world that men might have life—had come to satisfy their hunger with the bread of life. He was himself that Bread—in him was to be found the satisfaction of the spiritual hunger of men, and only those that feed on his flesh and drink his blood, that is become par-

takers of his nature, receive eternal life. To a material mind, the figurative way in which this teaching was given would naturally seem grossly material, and so we need not wonder that the Jews "murmured" (discussed, complained, criticised in a hostile spirit). It is more surprising that some of his disciples declared such teaching to be intolerable, and that from that day many who had hitherto professed discipleship turned away from him.

This was the crisis of his work in Galilee. Those who sought material blessings, those who had political aspirations, fell away, unable to receive a teaching so spiritual, caring nothing for a kingdom not of this world, or for food that did not nourish the body. But the Twelve, and some others doubtless, remained faithful. With Peter they believed that Jesus had words of eternal life, that his words and works avowed him to be God's Anointed One. He satisfied their deepest spiritual wants. Yet already Jesus could see in Judas signs of that defection which was to come.

The remaining appeals to the nation were made in Jerusalem. The authorities generally say that John is the most precise in his chronology of all the evangelists, which is true in a sense, though it is also true that John does not care a button for chronology. What he shows us is that Jesus made his appeals to the nation in connection with the great national feasts; partly because he had greater opportunity to present his teachings at those times, partly because the crowds then present were a protection to him. The Sanhedrin did not venture for some time to risk the disapprobation of the multitude by arresting him during a feast. Again and again we are told that he would have been summarily dealt with by that body but for this fear of the people, in whose eyes Jesus was a prophet.

The feast of booths afforded an excellent occasion for teaching the multitudes, and making an appeal to the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus declined to be moved by his brothers' taunts to make a demonstrative entry of the

city and a public proclamation of his Messianic character. A few months later, at the passover feast, he did this; and the result was his speedy death, as he had foreseen. Not to provoke such an untimely fate, while his work was still but half done, he now goes up quietly, but teaches publicly in the Temple. The authorities and leaders were astonished at his teaching, indeed perplexed, because he had not been a pupil of any Rabbi and belonged to none of the recognized schools or parties. But already among the people the question was anxiously discussed whether this teacher were not in truth the Christ. Enraged by this, the Pharisaic party in the Sanhedrin sent officers to arrest him, but these were so impressed by the teaching that they returned without their prisoner, saying, "No man ever talked like this!"*

What had so impressed them? A discourse in which Jesus declared that he was soon going wither they could not come, and because they did not believe his teaching they would die in their sins. He also declared more plainly than ever before his divine authority for his teachings: "He that sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do the things pleasing to him."

On the last day of the feast the teaching of Jesus becomes more emphatic; he promises the Water of Life; he declares that he alone can make men free. There is a tone of unusual sharpness in his denunciations of "the Jews" (some Rabbis apparently had engaged in controversy with him), for he now says they are not children of Abraham at all. The Jews could not receive him because he was not their ideal of a Messiah; and they had such an ideal because they had become alienated from God and so misunderstood the Scriptures. In conclusion, Jesus makes what every Jew would understand to be a

*The protest of Nicodemus on this occasion against this inequitable action of the majority of the Sanhedrin brings into clearer relief the fact that most of that body were now not merely opposed to Jesus, but determined to silence him—which, of course, could be effectively done in only one way.

claim of divine nature, "Before Abraham was, I am." They attempted to stone him on the spot for blasphemy. The rising tide of opposition is almost ready to overwhelm Jesus—the people are beginning to join their leaders.

The healing of the man born blind, which seemingly happened during this visit, deepens the intensity of feeling. It is symbolic, like all of the miracles of Jesus, and the discourse following in the Treasury of the Temple made clear its meaning. Jesus is the Light of the world; he has come to dispel the darkness, to cure the moral blindness that sin has caused. But he has also come for "judgment," for testing and sifting men. Those who, like the Pharisees, are not conscious of their need of healing and insist that they see, must remain in their darkness and guilt. The Jewish leaders not only could not receive this teaching, but they had the blind man whom he had healed expelled from the synagogue, because he proclaimed his trust in Jesus as the Christ. Persecution quickly followed rejection.

Passing over the intervening time without comment, John comes to the feast that commemorated the Dedication of the Temple. Again Jesus makes his appearance in Jerusalem and teaches in the Temple, this time in Solomon's colonnade. "The Jews" challenge him to tell frankly whether he is Messiah or not, but he does not permit them to force him into a premature declaration of himself. Yet he gives an implicit declaration of his office and work, in the allegories of the Good Shepherd and the Door; and he closes his discourse with the announcement that he and his Father are one. Again the Jews make a demonstration of stoning him, for what they regarded as blasphemous words, but he shows that the Scriptures which they accepted as God's word contained precedents for such language.

Escaping an attempt to arrest him, and judging that the excitement and opposition had become too great for him to continue his teaching in Jerusalem, he went for a

time to Perea. From now on he teaches only those who come to him of their own choice, for instruction. Luke has given us a very full account of this part of his ministry. Chapters xi. to xiii. of the third Gospel are given to this subject, and contain among other things the discourse on prayer, the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Unjust Steward and the Pharisee and Publican, as well as the incident of the rich young ruler. John merely says that many came to him at that time and believed.

This Perea ministry was interrupted by the greatest of the miracles of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus. The key to the chapter describing this event and its consequences is given us in the words, "I am the resurrection and the life." This "sign" again discloses Jesus as Lord of all things, including life and death, as the one in whom alone men have hope of eternal life. The miracle in the flesh was wrought only to turn men's minds to the miracle in the spirit that he was equally able and equally ready to work. But instead of this, it merely embittered his enemies and precipitated the long-preparing catastrophe. Jesus foresaw the consequences—the final rejection of his claims by the Jewish leaders, who, instead of being convinced by the truth of his teaching, were infuriated by his success, to the point of including Lazarus with Jesus in their scheme of vengeance. It was knowledge of this stiff-necked opposition, as well as the faint faith of his closest disciples, that made Jesus so indignant in spirit as he approached the tomb of Lazarus, and drew from him tears that the bystanders incorrectly interpreted as evidence of his great love and grief for his friend. He was not grieving for the dead Lazarus, but for living sinners, whose fixity of unbelief and malignant opposition cut him to the heart.

They had scornfully rejected him without taking pains to comprehend his teaching. He was not the sort of Messiah they were looking for, so in their eyes he was an impostor. But they greatly feared that his miracles would lead the people to accept him, and that a revolt

against Rome would be the natural consequence—a revolt certain to be unsuccessful and to be punished by a still further loss of their liberties. There was, therefore, (granting the validity of their premises) but one prudent course to pursue; to suppress this false Messiah, before worse mischief should be done. Their culpability lay in the fact that they had not even attempted to understand Jesus and his teachings; had they done so, their fears would have been shown to be groundless. Jesus was put to death in complete misapprehension of his aims, but if they had understood him better would the Jewish leaders have believed in him more readily? Nothing warrants an affirmative answer.

After the raising of Lazarus, Jesus again goes across the Jordan, to await the passover, when he will make the final manifestation of himself and complete his work. At the proper time he goes up to Jerusalem. Jesus may have made no appreciable impression on the Jewish leaders, he may have made less impression on the people than his large following would suggest, but at any rate he had a small company of intimate friends and disciples in whose hearts he was enshrined forever, in whose love and fidelity he could unquestioningly trust. His friends are the measure of his "glory." The story of the supper at Bethany is therefore told by John for its own sake and in its proper order, while the other Gospels tell it out of its chronological order, merely to explain the treason of Judas. The anger of this unworthy disciple at the rebuke of Jesus no doubt precipitated action that he had perhaps long secretly meditated.

On the following morning Jesus makes his entry into the city. The news of his coming has preceded him, and disciples came forth to welcome him. If there has been a steadily growing unbelief and hostility among the ruling classes, there has also been a rising tide of belief and enthusiasm among the people. The enthusiasm of the crowd leads them to make a considerable demonstration, and Jesus does not check them. The time has come for

him to declare himself unmistakably, and he accepts the title of Messiah as his of right when the acclaiming crowd confers it on him.

When he reaches the Temple, Jesus finds certain Greeks desiring to see and hear him, and he hails this as proof that his work has culminated, his mission is accomplished, since his fame has gone beyond the narrow limits of Judea. Henceforth nothing remains but to fructify by his death the truth he has been teaching. He leaves the Temple with his work on earth completed. His few remaining hours of life belong to the inner circle of his disciples, that he may impress himself as deeply as possible on their consciousness and prepare them to become his Apostles and witnesses.*

III.

Eight chapters—nearly half the entire writing, exclusive of Prologue and Epilogue—are devoted by John to the last manifestations and testimonies of Jesus. The greater part of this matter is peculiar to John, and even when he describes scenes and events that are narrated in the other Gospels with sufficient fulness for biographical purposes, the point of view from which he writes is so novel and the end he keeps in mind is so distinctive, that he is invariably led to give fresh incidents and illuminating details. We see this in the very first of the seven subdivisions of this part—the account of the last supper. Of the supper itself John says little, and of the institution of the Eucharist he says nothing at all—an omission that at first seems unaccountable and incredible, until we remind ourselves once more of his main object in writing, and then we see why he tells us only the one incident of Jesus washing the disciples feet. This was the supreme manifestation of Jesus' love. While his disciples were disputing which should be greatest in the kingdom, and

*The paragraph, xii, 37-43 is another pause in the narrative for an explanatory remark by the author.

striving which should have the seats of honor at table, he performs this menial service—not to teach humility, as is so commonly said, but to teach love, as he himself says (xiii. 1): the love that he actually had for his disciples, the love that they should have for each other (xiii. 12-17). He thus says to them in symbol, what he soon after says in word, “This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.”

In the conversation at the supper, we have one of the purely personal touches that are a part of the charm of this Gospel. John alone tells, as he alone of the evangelists knew at first hand, of the by-play between himself and Peter regarding the betrayer of Jesus. For tradition cannot be wrong in its uniform maintenance that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is to be regarded both here and elsewhere as no other than John himself.”*

After the departure of the traitor—smarting at the knowledge that his treason is now known not only to his Master, but to at least two of his fellow disciples, and burning to accomplish his evil purpose and receive his reward—Jesus begins the most tender and impressive of all his discourses. All that he says may be naturally classified under two topics: Union with Christ, and, The Coming of the Comforter. Let us disregard the exact order of the text and consider his words in their connection of thought.

We may then conceive the discourse as beginning with ch. xv. and the allegory of the Vine (xv. 1-8). From this Jesus passes to the New Commandment that he is about to leave with them (xiii. 34, 35), and the subject is continued in xv. 9-27. Union with Christ, as of the branches with the vine, a union whose proof and manifestation are furnished in their mutual love—this is the topic of the

*How finely, let us note in passing, John has sketched the character of Simon, with a few masterly strokes: his self-confidence, his obstinacy, his great heart, his dangerous impulsiveness. surely, Surely Simon has much to learn before he can become Peter, the Rock.

discourse. Studied in the light of this dominant idea, each verse easily yields its meaning.

The other topic, The Coming of the Comforter, to which transition is made in xv. 26, 27, is continued in xvi. 1-11 and 16-33. Then we return, for its further discussion, to xiii. 31, whence the discourse moves on to xiv. 29, to which should be added xvi. 12-15, and as the conclusion of the whole, xiv. 30, 31. If these discourses are read in this order, it will be seen that they are much more coherent and impressive, and that the meaning of each sentence becomes far clearer.

One can hardly miss the purpose of the author in so fully repeating to us these discourses. They are the crowning manifestation by Jesus to his disciples of his "glory," his unique character. Only the incarnate Word could thus intimately speak of his Father; only the incarnate Word could declare that "he that has seen me has seen the Father;" only the incarnate Word could speak of "the Comforter, whom I will send you." As these promises gave a new idea of their Master to the disciples who first heard them—an idea that never ceased to deepen and broaden—so the permanent record of them, it seemed to John, could not but give readers for all time a truer idea of the real character of Jesus Christ.

And now, having finished his instructions to his disciples, Jesus pours out his whole soul to his Father in prayer. This chapter xvii. is the most wonderful chapter of the Bible, for by admitting us to the privacy of his communion with his Father, our Lord has taken us into the very Holy of Holies. This is commonly called "Christ's Intercessory Prayer," and the title is so far justified as this: Jesus does in this prayer make intercession for his disciples, present and to be. But this is to name the prayer from a single element in it, and that not the most important. The chief thing in the prayer is not Christ's concern for his disciples, but Christ's relation to his Father. His work on earth is finished, he is standing (so to speak) by his open grave,

he is in the very article of death, and under these circumstances he solemnly commends to his Heavenly Father himself, his work and his followers. Far more appropriately than to the prayer given by Matthew and Luke the name of the Lord's Prayer might have been given to this outpouring of our Lord's inmost heart. The other prayer should be called the Disciples' Prayer. It is, of course, hopeless to think of changing a usage that has so rooted itself in Christian literature, but we can at least remember that this is the real Lord's Prayer, and so think of it.

And as to its substance, let us note that it is largely communion with God, soul to soul, heart to heart. It is not mainly petition. Petition has its place in this, as in all prayer, but here its place is distinctly subordinate. Communion, fellowship—that is the essence of prayer. If we come to God only to seek gifts from him, even spiritual gifts, we have not yet learned the nature of true prayers.

Upon the three testimonies of the arrest and trial, the crucifixion, death and burial, and the resurrection, it is not necessary to dwell. The author's purpose is evident in each case; the bearing of Jesus under this supreme test, the proofs of his divine nature that he continually gave, correspond to the general theme and round out the account of the incarnate Word. The words and incidents that John alone reports—we may note especially the incident of "the doubting Thomas"—are such as precisely suit his purpose to let the greatness of Christ's character speak for itself. He was right in believing that Jesus is himself the most convincing argument for the truth of Christianity, as generations of readers of this Gospel have discovered and testified.

With ch. xx. the Gospel proper ends, but who would wish omitted the Epilogue and its personal reminiscences? It is the most touching manifestation of the character of Jesus in the whole book, his unbounded love and mercy, the forgiveness that could restore Peter without rebuke

(save one delicately hinted), to his place of primacy and influence among the apostles.

Who that is not blind to all spiritual verities can fail to see that this Gospel has told the story of a life that continually revealed "grace," "truth," "glory"—a glory as of One Only-begotten of the Father—a character so completely unique that it is explicable only as John explained it: Jesus of Nazareth was not only Son of Man, but Son of God, the Word made flesh.