The John I Know

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Preface

Many influences have helped me to my present understanding of the Gospel of John. First of all, I have learned much from reading, re-reading, and studying the Gospel, both in its original Greek text, as well as in various modern translations. The Gospel itself never seems to fail to unlock more of its secrets through individual study. The Holy Spirit truly works enlightenment through the Scripture! Secondly, I am very grateful that through thirty-six years of teaching this Biblical masterpiece in seminaries, Bible camps and youth conferences, I have learned much from the questioning students, who usually become quite excited and enthusiastic about its message of Life. Thirdly, no expositor of John can study independently today: for many great scholars have preceded him. Recent commentary masterpieces by C. K. Barrett, Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond E. Brown, and Rudolf Schnackenburg in particular have unquestionably enriched my understanding of this unique writing. The author is particularly grateful for these influences in his understanding of the Gospel. Also a number of my own teachers have excited and encouraged me in my study of this Gospel: Herman Preus at Luther Seminary, Otto Piper at Princeton Seminary, James Stewart at the New College, University of Edinburgh, and Raymond E. Brown at the Pontifical Institute in Rome. While I would not want them to be responsible for anything in this work, I nevertheless wish to express my continuing debt of gratitude to them. The aim of this work is not to add to the body of academic research which has naturally gathered around this profound Christian writing. We have classic commentaries today. However, our purpose shall be rather to try to interpret in a clear manner the deep spiritual implications of the message of John for our Christian living today. People of faith keep saying that they hear a voice speaking from deep within John's Gospel. Many people have helped me to hear this voice more clearly. But it is difficult to distinguish where the voice from within the Gospel leaves off and mine begins. So we shall try in these studies to listen for the sound of the voice that speaks from within John's story. Whenever I pick up the Gospel of John and start to read, I find it a haunting and mysterious book, yet a book so simply written that children enjoy it, and at the same time scholars are intrigued by its deep meanings. Most people understand the surface details of the story John tells well enough, but underneath the surface almost every sentence bursts with deeper hints and allusions. Generally the Biblical quotations in this book are from the Revised Standard Version. However, in a few cases, my own literal translation from the Greek is quoted to

give a more exact meaning. Welcome to the study. May the Holy Spirit enrich and vitalize your understanding of this masterpiece!

Introduction

Throughout our lives. we become acquainted with a large number of people. Because of circumstances such as geographical proximity. natural attraction. or a kind of personal magnetism, some of these acquaintences become deep friends. as we have the opportunity and desire to cultivate these relationships. So it is with "The John I Know." Growing up in a pious Christian home. I learned early in a very natural way to love the Holy Scriptures and to use them in daily life. Somehow from early times the Gospel and Epistles of John spoke especially meaningfully to me, simply and directly. This continued through my college years. when one of the spiritual highlights for me was attendance at a summer student retreat (LSU Retreat at Fair Hills Resort, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota) at which the theme was "Chosen in Christ," and the text studied was John 15:16. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." As this theme was discussed by athletes. scientists. literary specialists. and the full gamut of college students, under the adroit leadership of Dr. Art E. Hanson, we were all deeply involved by the overwhelming thought of the plenitude of God's grace in Jesus Christ in choosing us. Throughout thirty-seven years as a teacher of New Testament at two Lutheran seminaries. I have continued studies in the unique Gospel of St. John, inspired both by the students' penetrating and vital questions and by my own personal quest for fullness of life. And the "John I Know" has been giving challenging and rewarding inspiration to my teaching in relation to these very existential questions. To life's great and earnest queries, such as, what is the purpose of life, what constitutes a successful life, how can a ruined life be restored, etc., the teachings of Jesus Christ as given in the Gospel of St. John speak in a constitutive and constructive way to these basic questions of modern students. So in these chapters we shall attempt to elucidate some of these "gospel truths" in relation to humankind's pressing questions.

Finding Life's True Meaning

We in the Church constantly need John's message so that Christianity may remain vital and speak to critical issues of life. We live in a time of great unrest, a time of disrespect for old authorities and traditions, a time of great yearning for life's certainties. Unlike the Reformation Age, when people's deep concern for personal guilt characterized their religious quest, people of today seem generally to be unconcerned with individual guilt. This Reformation concern has seemingly been pushed into the background by persistent

questions about the meaning and purpose of life in general. The struggle seems to be waged rather on the front of the apparent meaninglessness of life itself, along with a questioning of and rebellion against the established order and the old traditional moral values. In other words, the arena seems to have shifted from soteriology (How can a person be justified before God?) to the theological realm (If there is a God, how can he let men suffer? What kind of a God is he? etc.). Basic religious questions that are being repeatedly asked are: Why are things the way they are? What do poverty, injustice, and inequity have to do with the Church, and why do they mar our enlightened society? Where can we discover firm and lasting values by which to live and significant ideals for which to sacrifice and strive? How can we find justice in a world of widespread prejudice and selfishness, and how call we find fairness and equity in a society in which privilege exists for only the very few? More than any other New Testament writing, John's Gospel is the writing with a cosmic perspective. It is neither parochial nor nationalistic, as our thinking and attitudes tend so often to be. It has since the time of Clement of Alexandria been called the "spiritual" Gospel, or the "universal Gospel, symbolized in Christian art by the eagle soaring above all mundane concerns. It was to the Samaritan woman (regarded then as a non-Jew because of her mixed race) that Jesus was revealed as "the Savior of the world" (4:42). In this Gospel all geographic localism, religious sectarianism and racial discrimination are transcended. Today we seek to promote good will among all nations and a common understanding and fellowship between the various Christian groups. While John's Gospel does have many Jewish characteristics that surely indicate that its author has his roots in Israel, it is most likely, however, that it was from the Hellenistic Asia Minor city of Ephesus that it proclaims its message of God's love for the whole world. Further, in a sort of prophetic way, the Gospel predicts the day when the division of peoples into groups will be replaced by a true unity of God's people, as he includes the dominical promise, "There shall be one flock, and one shepherd." (10:16). What serious-thinking people today want is reality, genuineness, and truth. These are legitimate concerns that grip the hearts of earnest seekers of all ages today, as they struggle for meaningful identity. In the late first century, it was St. John's Gospel that gave some of the most helpful enlightenment of these questions that have ever been given. To refer once more to the sixteenth century reformation period, we know that then there was a time of great restlessness in Europe both socially and religiously. Among the religious problems that disturbed the people of Luther's day, as we previously mentioned, was a heavy sense of guilt before the sovereign God, along with a deep yearning for the assurance of forgiveness of sins. Luther found the answer for himself and others by looking to the work of Christ in his life, suffering, death, and victorious resurrection as the only means of forgiveness and new life. His rediscovery of Paul's clear message in his epistles, especially Galatians and Romans, that a person is justified (i.e. forgiven) "by faith alone, apart from works of the law," became the clarion cry which God used to reform the church of Luther's day, and to rally much of central Europe about him in a religious renewal. One of Luther's contemporary artists depicted this central theological truth in a famous painting, now found on the altar raredos of the

city church in Wittenberg (now called "Lutherstadt"), East Germany. Lucas Cranach's masterpiece on the predella, called by some rightly "a contemporary snapshot," shows Luther in the pulpit with his left hand resting on the open Bible, and his right hand index finger pointing the worshipers to the wounded Christ on the Cross, in whom they find forgiveness and new life.[1] Cranach understood evangelical theology and interpreted the Gospel as the good news of forgiveness in the crucified and resurrected Christ. The Scriptures are a means, always pointing to Christ, the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Preaching is also seen here as a means, pointing the hearers to Christ, as the only object of saving faith! We sincerely believe that The John I Know" can and does yet speak convincingly concerning these very burning questions. In our day when there is such a sense of futility and despair among people, when many persons seek "outs" in drugs, alcohol, or even isolation and suicide, the loving words of Jesus, quoted by St. John, seem to be particularly relevant, words such as I have come that people may have life, and may have it in all its fulness" (10:10b). "Things" will not satisfy a person's yearnings for the infinite. The true significance of life is not explained by the latest gadget rolling off the assembly line, or in some new highly-advertised psychological discovery. Even vocational success may not satisfy one's cry for meaningfulness in life. Life's meaning is tied to God and to our relationship to Him, not to things, jobs, or ideas. So John's message is particularly relevant to our times, and we hope that these chapters may help us see this relevance in a new and meaningful way. What unifies the entire Gospel is the presentation of the person of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. Luther emphasized in a time of religious reform that it did no good to say that Christ died for our sins; rather salvation was effective only when one can say that Christ died for my. sins. Another time he said, "The genius of Christianity lies in the personal pronouns." Similarly, John also emphasizes faith as a personal, as well as a unifying corporate possession.

Notes

[1] A visit to the City Church in Wittenberg last summer gave me opportunity for the first time to study this famous painting. A little later, I was reminded of this significant work in the book by Fredrik A. Schiotz, "One Man's Story," Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1980, p. 145.

Chapter 1

I WISH I COULD BELIEVE THAT!

It was a lovely summer day, and amid the pernicious whining of numerous chain saws cutting up trees uprooted by the recent thunderstorms, so frequent in the lake country of Minnesota in the summer, my friend confronted me with the question, "Have you got time to come into the cottage and talk with me?" "Of course, I do," I immediately replied, and so we went in and took chairs and talked. "What makes a life successful?" he asked. We discussed the futilities of materialism, hedonism, and many other futile "isms" that confront people in any day. To him I pointed in Johannine language to the option of "believing in Jesus Christ, and believing have life in His name" (20:30). I also pointed to other Johannine teachings of life such as "he who believes/the Son has life eternal, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him" (3:36), "In him was life, and the life was the light of men!" (1:4), and other similar teachings of our Lord in the Gospel of John. My friend asked, "Do you really believe that? I only wish that I could believe it!" He is not alone. Today many people, both those within the Christian Church as well as those outside of the established church are asking the same questions that my friend asked me. Some years ago an editorial in LIFE Magazine contained this arresting quotation:

> People have become weary of the words of men. They have lost confidence in man's ideas, man's programs, man's plans. They are hungry to hear a voice from the other side–a voice of truth, a voice of authority, whose ways will work in the lives of men.

From the very early days of Christianity this Gospel has had a deserved popularity in the church. Down through the centuries the Christian community has marveled at and received inspiration from the Gospel of St. John. Our own Twentieth century has also been fascinated with this Gospel, and it has been estimated that in the fifty years from

1920 to 1970, "over 2,000 books and articles have been dedicated to unearthing the many riches of the Fourth Gospel."[2] Truly, this Gospel has been "an artesian well that never runs dry."[3] The Gospel presents the personal recollections of an old man, who knew and loved and revered his Lord.[4] It throbs with life and color and unusual vividness and clarity, and the author presents a never-to-be-forgotten picture of the Messiah, whom he serves with love. So it gets to be a matter of discipleship. Myself, or another! Success in achieving my own selfish goals or finding meaning beyond myself in another! This search for meaning in life through the years has made this gospel a deserved popular study in the church, and outside of it. Many of the passages of this Gospel are among the best known and most deeply cherished words of the entire Scriptures. This Gospel is totally Christo-centric, for it points to Jesus the Son of God as the only source of new life and full meaning of existence. But while this is true, this profound, creative work is not always appreciated or understood, because of its distinct qualities. The Book of John " ... teams with subtleties and apparent paradoxes."[5] Another book may not help, but our attempt is to help the reader understand better some of the nuances of this brilliant author. The message of the Gospel has had a hard time down through the years because human beings prefer to set their own goals to achieve human success. To live for others through the love of the Great Giver seems to us entirely irrational. But that is the message we get through the teaching of the Son of God in John's Gospels. "I wish I could believe that!" my friend cried out. Since this is contrary to human thought, only the Holy Spirit can inspire such faith, and overcome the human selfish goals. "God's grace is sufficient for all, but efficient for those who believe!" It is not surprising that in John's Gospel the strong emphasis is on the verb "believe," used three times as often as in the other three Gospels combined.[6] The author prefers the verb of action, rather than the noun, "faith." All through the Gospel, the readers are called to commit themselves to Christ, the Son of God, in a life-giving relationship of faith; for the Gospel is written for us, and we read, hear, and study it in order that we may continue to live in faith (20:31). Jesus reveals himself to us through his acts and words (revelation), and we receive him in faith (1:12). "For John, being a believer and being a disciple are really synonymous, for faith is the primary factor in becoming a Christian."[7] The interrelationship of "seeing," "believing," and "knowing" in John's Gospel is very close and, indeed significant. Because of this relationship, Bultmann can write:

> Sight, then, is the knowing that is peculiar to faith. Hence see and know can be combined or be used as alternatives (14:7,9,17; I John 3:6) .... Faith is genuine only insofar as it is knowing faith.[8]

Hence John can say that to "know" God is eternal life, "This is eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou has sent, Jesus Christ" (17:3). Through experiential knowledge of Him comes salvation. To "know the truth" is to be set free (8:32). Knowledge, then, is a way of entrance into salvation and life. Jesus Himself knows the Father, and His ministry may be summed up as the communication of knowledge (1:18; 17:26). Bultmann has made the very helpful suggestion that "believing" takes over,

in Johannine language, an element of the meaning of the Hebrew word for "knowing" (yad) which the Greek word for knowing (ginoskein) did not possess. In Hebrew, yad carried the connotation of acknowledging God by way of submission to his will. Some of this idea is included in John's use of "believing" (pisteuein).[9] Likewise, R. Schnackenburg in a monumental 3-volume Commentary set (two volumes are now available in English), associates two main ideas with John's understanding of "believing." The first is the matter of confessing that Jesus is the Christ. The second builds on the first and involves obedience and discipleship. Christian character should be a natural corollary and result of faith. He writes:

> Johannine faith is intrinsically ordained to confessing; it is a faith to be expressed in Christological confessions, which must persevere in face of unbelief (in the Gospel) and heresy (in I John)....
>
> Finally, Johannine faith is most intimately connected with discipleship... an active faith which is exercised in deeds as well as in words and which perseveres in fraternal charity (13:34f.; 15:8).[10]

For the writer of St. John's Gospel, believing always has an object, i.e. Jesus Christ. Believing is not an end, but a means to the end, which is life, life in relation to the Messiah, the Son of God. A major part of the Fourth Gospel is thus concerned with the motivation of faith in the identity of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. Does "that you may believe" means to "go on believing" (i.e.Christians), or does it mean to "come to believe" (i.e. non-believers who come to faith)? Grammatically, it can be either a present subjunctive (implying on-going belief) or an aorist (past) subjunctive (indicating coming to the faith relationship). Both forms are used in the Greek text, and the evidence is about evenly divided.[11] However, since John assumes a prior knowledge of the Jesus tradition, it seems to be more likely that the Gospel was written to strengthen the faith of Christians by re-focusing it more sharply on the person of Christ. For the Fourth Evangelist, one can approach Jesus as a Jew or a Greek, a Samaritan or a Gnostic, but one can have life in him only as a trusting Christian, by believing him to be the Son of God. When we see him in this way, as John intends us to, we begin to see things as they really are. A good look at Jesus Christ, and we get our facts straight: facts about ourself, about human nature, about our relationship to other human beings, about God, and about the world. Bernard Baruch is quoted as once saying to a journalist, "A man has a right to his own opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts." John's Gospel is written "that we may know ...." In Arthur Miller's great play, "Death of a Salesman," Willy Loman's wife says of her tragic husband, "He never quite knew who he was!" We live in an age when many people like my friend John – and Willy Loman –don't know who they are and are yearning for identification in this universe. Not knowing one's purpose and destiny leads to frustration, aimlessness, and emptiness. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, once wrote: "About one-third of my cases are suffering from no clinical, definable neurosis, but from senselessness,

the emptiness of their lives. They do not understand themselves, and they're unable to live happily with themselves." A careful study of the opening section of the Gospel of John highlights the Christocentric orientation of the entire Gospel. Much more than any other Gospel, the Fourth Gospel focuses attention on the person of Jesus as the object of faith, even to the point at times of seemingly minimizing the message he brings. "I wish I could believe that!"my friend said. Here was a man who was an apparent earthly success, with a fine family, a person successful in his work, but without any meaningful and challenging goals for his life. It is true that alcoholism had crowded in, and by his own confession, his church life had become a mere formality, but he cried for life, life with meaning, life with goals worth living for. Since his father had also been an alcoholic, he wondered whether he was doomed by heredity to a meaningless life. The Gospel of John seemed to be written for him, and all those like him who find life empty and sterile. "I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fulness." (10:10, NEB). Aided by the Spirit of Truth, the evangelist has written a Gospel which could do what Jesus' revealing word was intended to do, that is, to elicit faith and thus make eternal life possible for all those who believe. "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (20:31).

Notes

[2]George W. MacRae, S. J., Faith in the Word: The Fourth Gospel, Herald Biblical Booklets, 1973, p. 1.

[3]D. G. Vanderlip, Christianity According to John. Westminster, 1975, p. 9.

[4]When we say "personal recollections of an old man," we are not deciding the question of authorship, whether the apostle, John of Ephesus, or any other. We simply mean that the message has been the result of meditation by the early church. We will give a summary of some of the questions of authorship later.

[5]Kysar, The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel, Augsburg,1975, p. 174.

[6]The data: "Believe" (pisteuein) occurs as follows in the N.T.: Synoptics - 34 John - 107 Total in N.T. - 243 & I, II, III John. The full data is given in Brown; The Gospel of John, I, pp. 512-13, as well as in most standard commentaries.

[7]Ibid., I, p. 512.

[8]R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, II, p. 73.

[9]Ibid., p. 73-74.

[10]R. Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, Vol. I, p. 566. Seabury, 1968. (Vol. II, 1980).

[11]The summary of the problem is discussed by Bruce Metzger in "A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament" (p. 256) as follows: "Both $\pi\iota\sigma\Gamma\epsilon\mu N\gamma\mu$ and $\pi\iota\sigma\Gamma\epsilon\mu\sigma N\gamma\mu$ have notable early support. The Aorist tense, strictly interpreted, suggests that the Fourth Gospel was addressed to non-Christians so that they might come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah; the present tense suggests that the aim of the writer was to strengthen the faith of those who already believe "that you may continue to believe"). In view of the difficulty of choosing between the readings by assessing the supposed purpose of the Evangelist (assuming that he used the tenses of the subjunctive strictly), the Committee considered it preferable to represent both readings by enclosing σ within square brackets."

Chapter 2

WHO IS HE?

A person is the topic of this book, and that person is revealed as the Son of God, the true man. All through his writing, the author is endeavoring to bring the reader into definite personal relationship with this Son of God, in whom he believes there is eternal life. He does not write this Gospel to acquaint the reader with the historical facts primarily, but to make one alive in the Father and the Son. It can truly be said that the one theme of the Gospel is the Son of God (20:31). For the reader to really appreciate this writing, it is the Son of God himself who must make it meaningful. The reflective mind of the author was captured by the person of the Son of God, captured in his entire being by the Person who had the words of eternal life. He had witnessed to others what believing in Jesus had done in the life of the Christian community for these several generations. To know "Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" expressed everything for him. Now his primary aim was to somehow help believers grow with the whole response of their lives to this person of Jesus, the Son of God. A. T. Robertson calls this Gospel "the greatest of all the books produced by man, the eternal gospel from the eagle who soars to the very heavens and gives us a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The writing is so potent because the reader is confronted with the basic answer to life's questions. A modern master of preaching writes about his Gospel: Nothing has so profoundly impressed the minds of men as the Gospel of John. It is truly the 'Holy of holies' of the entire Bible. It is the remarkable interpretation of the life, the words, the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth revealed himself as the Christ, the Son of God. It is the most familiar, the most important, the most sublime, the most spiritual, the best loved of all the pictures of the Master. Its stories, its statements, its 'signs,' its simplicity, its profundity amaze the reader who comes under the spell of its compelling interest. [12] The ancient church had a great interest in this Gospel, for the first known commentary on any New Testament book is the commentary on John by Heracleon, a Gnostic. It is recorded by John of Salisbury that St. Cuthbert was in the practice of curing the sick by placing on them a copy of the Gospel of St. John, and that his own copy was placed under his head when he was buried. [13] The German

poet, Boethe, writing to his friend, Herder, on February 20, 1786, said: "From all this follows what I commend to you again and again, the Gospel of John, for in it you have all of Moses and the prophets, and of the evangelists and the apostles." John Calvin may have been correct in his view that the Gospel of John provided the key for understanding the other three. He writes:

I am accustomed to say that this Gospel is a key to open the door for understanding the rest; for whoever shall understand the power of Christ, as it is here strikingly portrayed, will afterwards read with advantage what the others relate about the Redeemer who was manifested. [14]

So we come to this Gospel seeking not a theology, not historic facts about the life of Christ, not a supplement to the first three Gospels, not to know an ancient story better, but to know a person! We come not to find authoritative doctrine, but to personally know the Son of God, who in this Gospel reveals Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and through Whom we can possess Eternal Life. As far as we can tell, this Gospel of John was written for Greek Christians living at the end of the first century. It has often been called the "Hellenistic" Gospel. Therefore, this book belongs to the Greek life which flourished in the magnificent metropolis of Ephesus, the place usually assigned to its authorship, about two generations after the death of Jesus. Many significant things had happened in that interval of about seventy years. By the time of its writing there were churches throughout the Greek speaking world, many of them founded by Paul or his co-workers. These churches were quite different from that community of Jewish believers in Jerusalem in the years immediately following the death of Jesus. The Greeks had their own language, their unique characteristic patterns of thought, and their significant background of religious understanding. This Gospel had to speak in that language and express itself in the modes of thought familiar to their people, in whom was so much of the future of the church. And that is exactly what takes place in this Gospel. In the words of a scholar,

The church should not come to this book to know an ancient story better, but to know a Person; not to form opinions, but to know a Life; not to find a doctrine, but to know the Son of God, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and through Him to possess eternal life. [15]

Much more than the other Gospels, John's Gospel focuses its attention on the person of Jesus as the object of faith, even to the point of minimizing his message. As an example, in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus preaches that the Kingdom of God is near; in John, Jesus preaches himself instead of the Kingdom. So replacing the Kingdom of God, the image of Christ as the King and as the Life-giver appear. So in virtually every episode of the Gospel, the evangelist's reinterpretation highlights the person of Jesus almost to the exclusion of any emphasis on the message of Jesus. The discourses form a large part of the Gospel. The most striking feature of the discourses of Jesus in this Gospel is that Jesus talks mostly about himself, the discourses are thoroughly Christocentric. He comes to confront people with the challenge of a word from God that is personal to him and to them. That is why the confrontation is not a miraculous action but a revealing word, and that is also why

true faith is a response to this word, not merely to the "signs." All scripture is, of course, unique and that is why the Church has emphasized Christianity as a "revealed" religion. Gregory the Great, who was bishop of Rome from A.D. 590-604, said of the scriptures in his own picturesque language, that the New Testament "is a kind of river, in whose depths an elephant may swim about."[16] This can surely be applied to the Gospel of John for there are many levels of understanding and appreciation, and that is why it stands first in the devotion of a vast majority of Christians. Nevertheless this Gospel is different, and we must try to appreciate these differences, rather than to try to harmonize it with the others. It should speak to us in its own strange, yet clearly unique voice. To understand its uniqueness is a part of our task. What more does John reveal to us about the person to whom he points in his Gospel? John uses four distinctive titles to explain this central object of the faith, which he seeks to motivate in his readers. The four descriptive titles used to describe this person, all introduced in the Prologue, 1:1-18, are: Son of Man, Word (logos), Son of God, and Christ (Messiah). The only one used in the Synoptic Gospels is the term, "Son of Man," and even in this term John's usage differs significantly from the Synoptic usage. John's Christological contribution through the use of these terms is to show Jesus in relation to God, as well as with man. Let us examine John's usage of each of these terms in order, and see what unique understanding we may receive in the Johannine usage of these terms. The distinctive presentation of the person of Jesus in terms of both pre- existent divinity and a real humanity in this Gospel is significant for two reasons: a) This Christological approach, as we have already said, is the basis of John's total theology of salvation. Always in the New Testament. soteriology and Christology are inextricably related, and particularly so also in John's Gospel. E. Käsemann says that the christological emphasis integrates the whole of John's theology.[17] b) John's Christianity seems to stand alone in the New Testament. John was a courageous theological pioneer in primitive Christianity. He not only acknowledged the two natures of Christ, but in addition pointed the way toward a possible resolution of the tension which such a two nature Chriptology involves. It was from John that the early fathers of the church took their cue when they eventually formulated their own "two-natures" Christology at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. The manhood of Jesus is definitely taught throughout all the four Gospels. It was as a man, a Jew of the first century, that he spoke and worked in Palestine, and John also emphasizes this humanity in various ways. He mentions that Jesus was "weary" from his journey when he sat by the side of the well in Samaria (4:6), that he was "troubled" and wept at the grave of Lazarus (11:33,35), and that on the cross he was "thirsty" (19:28). He states that Jesus carried his own cross (19:17) and says explicitly that he was "dead" (19:33). Even after the resurrection his body is said to have borne the marks of physical wounds (20:27). In these ways John stressed that the Logos became truly flesh, .took on a real (not an apparent, i.e. "docetic") humanity. Nevertheless, he does not go as far. as the synoptics do in depicting Jesus as expressing human emotions. He is. never said in John to have been "angry" (as in Mark 3:5), or "surprised" (Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9), or to have had "compassion" for people (Mark 6:34). Now let us look at each of these Christological

terms, used by John in his Gospel, which help to reveal the true divine-human union:

2.1 Son of Man

As previously mentioned, the term Son of Man is the only Christological title used openly of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. However, Johns Son of Man sayings are all unique to him, and we should therefore expect and search for a distinctive Johannine interpretation of the term and in that we are not disappointed. The term is used thirteen times in the Gospel of John to explain his central Christological theme. John uses the title (as also do Daniel, and the apocalyptic writings, I Enoch and II Esdras in the Old Testament) to refer to one who suffers and who is exalted. This characteristic is in common with the Synoptics. However, John differs from them, in that usually his sayings lack the emphasis on the vindication of the Son of man in future glory. John characteristically lacks this eschatological outlook, in line with his "inaugurated eschatology" emphasis. Another point worth noting in the usage of thisterm.by John is that the main statements of the gospel by John are all given in terms of his Son of Man Christology; as Son of Man Jesus comes into the world, dies, is exalted, and is given the authority to execute judgment. (Cf. John 3:13, 14-15; 12:23; 5:27). Let us notice a few of these examples: "No one has ascended into heaven but he who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man." (3: 13) "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (3:14-15) "And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified . " (12:23) "and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." (5:27) In John, as well as in the Synoptic Gospels (where it occurs some seventy times), the title "Son of Man" is the one claimed by our Lord. It is found only on the lips of Jesus, and in almost all cases refers very definitely to himself in his humiliation or to his exaltation. While there has been a great deal of research and study as to the origin of this term, so important in the New Testament, several conclusions seem to be consistent with the findings of the scholars.[18] In the Old Testament, the term "Son of Man" was a Hebrew and Aramaic expression which originally meant simply "man" or "humanness." It is so used in the Psalms, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (8:4). In the more than ninety usages in Ezekiel, it apparently also describes the prophet as a frail human creature in the sight of Almighty God. But modern research is quite consistent in showing that the source of this title must be either Daniel 7:13, or that part of the book of Enoch known as the "Similitudes" (Enoch 27-71), which document is commonly held to belong to the first century before Christ, Here, in the "Similitudes, the "Son of Man" is a name for the Messiah regarded as a supernatural being predestined by God to be judge at the end of history. In both Daniel and Enoch, the title seems to have its Messianic possibilities, and came to be used of a supernatural figure of glory, the "elect one" who was to come to inaugurate the new age. While it is not definite, it does seem that the Jews identified this Son of man with the

expected Messiah. In some circles there were thoughts of two deliverers, and the Qumran community in particular looked for more than one Messiah. In the Synoptic Gospels, the term occurs frequently, and is used in two ways, to denote future glory, and to denote suffering and service. It is in this second way that the title is used distinctively by Jesus. When he used the title, Jesus combined the idea of service and that of sacrifice with the idea of sovereignty. The disciples, however, had difficulty understanding their Lord as suffering and sovereign, for not strangely this seemed to them to be a contradiction. These same two notes are also found in John's Gospel. Nathanael is told that he will see angels coming upon the Son of man (1:51). Christ has judgment committed to him, as the Son of man (5:27), a phrase which recalls the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31ff., which itself has a parallel in Jewish apocalyptic literature. But the suffering of the Son of man is also his glory. After Judas has left the room at the last supper Jesus can exclaim, "Now is the Son of man glorified" (13:31), even though he was going almost immediately to his death. Three times in this Gospel it is stated that the Son of man must be "lifted up" (3: 14; 3:28; 12:34). The cross in John is not a shame or defeat but a triumph. There are no parallels in John to the apocalyptic passages in the synoptics where the "day" or the "coming" of the Son of man is referred to, in which the conventional phrases current among the Jews are used to express the conviction of Jesus of the ultimate triumph of the cause of God. Rather in this Gospel, it seems that Jesus knew himself called of God to blend in his own person and destiny the two roles of the Son of man as fully human as found in Daniel, and the servant of the Lord, as found in Isaiah. "He was born to suffer, born a king." In discussing this problem, one scholar says, "If you want to use a title for Christ, it is the title Son of Man which best befits him. The Son of Man title and its abbreviation, Son, constitute the heart of johannine christology."[19] The claim of the writer seems to be that sonship, as pictured in this Gospel, means the unique relationship with God the Father, by the Son who participates in God's very essence, and is therefore, divine. If in Hebrew thought godlikeness resulted from obedience, and in hellenistic thought was rather to have the nature of deity within one, we can see the blending of these two ideas in John's use of the "Son of man" title. Jesus shows the 'way to the Father through obedience (4:34) by revealing God's true nature in himself (10:30).

2.2 The Word (Greek=Logos)

When we study the prologue to John's Gospel, we are immediately confronted with several problems such as, Is it an integral part of the Gospel? Is it by the same author as the rest of the Gospel? Does it reflect the same theology as the Gospel? Is its purpose to introduce or summarize the Gospel, or what is its purpose? Raymond Brown calls the Prologue "an early Christian hymn, probably stemming from Johannine circles, which has been adapted to serve as an overture to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate word."[20] One can well grant the possibility that the Prologue should be understood as a hymn and that

it well may have been used in the worship of the ancient Church. Furthermore, it may have been composed, as many scholars think, after the body of the Gospel was written. If so, this could help to explain the allusion to John the Baptist, which need not then be regarded as an interpolation but rather as a deliberate preparation for the more explicit information about the forerunner and his work that is supplied in the following chapters. Central to the message of the Prologue, of course, is the term Logos (= the word). Used as a personal designation, it is confined in New Testament usage to the Johannine literature. The four occurrences show the Logos as pre-existent (John 1:1), as becoming incarnate (John 1:14), as the one confronted in his earthly life and ministry (I John 1:1-3), and finally as coming again in triumph (Rev. 19:13). (This seeming progression should not be taken as positive evidence for the comparative dating of the books mentioned, nor proof of a common authorship, which are separate questions altogether.) Here we note that John's special Christological title is used in the Gospel in 1:1-4, 14 and not thereafter. In the rest of the Gospel the term "Son" in one of its forms seems to take over. Throughout the rest of the Gospel the life of Jesus is presented as a manifestation of the divine Logos on earth among men. The miracles are regarded as "signs" of his glory. Throughout his life Jesus is pictured as self-determined, in full control of every situation, truly sovereign. He "knows" what is in men and does not need anyone to teach him (2:24-25). He is able to see into the characters of people (1:42; 1:47-48; 4:16-18; 6:70). He does not ask for information, for he knows the answer beforehand (6:5-6). He even prays, not because he needs to, but to impress other people (11:42). He rejects advice from anybody–from his mother (2:4), his brothers (7:3-6), from Pilate (19:10-11) and from the Jews. He is not killed by his enemies; he lays down his life of his own choice (10:18). He is not apprehended, but gives himself up (18:4-8). Great emphasis is placed on the power of his words (6:63), which even his enemies acknowledge (7:46; 18:6). All of these characteristics of the Johannine Christ are shown as the life of the divine Logos on earth, showing how he is always the master of the situation. All of these characteristics of Jesus are given, however, without compromising his relationship with the Father. He acts with the authority of the Father (5:43). The Father is greater than he is (14:28). He does not seek his own will but the Father's will (5:30; 8:29). He even says in one place that he can do nothing by himself, but only what he sees the Father doing (5:19). While he is pictured as a sovereign Lord, his relationship to his Father is never compromised or negated in this Gospel. Why did John use Logos as a Christological term in the Prologue? The Greeks had a second term for "word," namely Hrema, one that is used frequently in the New Testament. Why then did the author choose to use Logos in the Prologue? The difference in meaning in the two words is that Hrema is generally useful for indicating word as a statement, while Logos stresses word in its meaning. Therefore, Logos is more useful to indicate the idea of revelation, which is apparently John's major purpose in the Prologue. Furthermore, when John wrote, both Jew and Gentile were familiar with the Logos concept. The "Word of God" for the Hebrews was a common expression for the creating, delivering and saving God. God's word was powerful because it did things. For the Hebrews, God's word was always an effective word,

a successful word. "For He spoke and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth." (Psalm 33:9). The Word of God came to the prophets and gave them the effective message for their people. The Word of God was the link between the all-powerful God and the human world. Later in Jewish thought, "Word of God" was also connected with Wisdom, and Wisdom, in turn was deified, as in the Wisdom literature (Cf. esp. Proverbs 8:22-31). Still later, Judaism identified wisdom with the Torah, the written and identifiable word of God. For the Hebrew, God's word was a word in action, one that achieved results, an effective word, a word that expressed His will for the people. In Hellenism, on the other hand, beginning way back, and continuing through Stoicism down to the New Testament period, Logos was understood as that power that gave order to the cosmos, that which kept the world in its orbit, rather than letting it fly into disorder and chaos. A bit of , that cosmic order was also embedded in the mind of every person, so that every person was related to God through the Logos, as the ordering principle. When, therefore, these ideas from the Hebrew and the Greek world are brought together in the prologue in this word, Logos, it was familiar in the common man's thought. So the author intends to say something very significant and unusual about Jesus Christ as the Son of God. "He intends to apply this broad religious-philosophical category of Logos to Jesus in order to say that Jesus fulfilled the whole vast tradition of many different religions and philosophical views of the universe. The author is saying, in effect: Yes, Christ is all of this–Stoic Logos, Old Testament Word, and Jewish Wisdom–rolled into one person. Logos for the Christian is a person."[21] The author is not moving in the realm of speculation or philosophical probability. He is giving his personal confession of what Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to be to him and to His disciples. He is a living, historical person, who has been revealed by God to identify with His creatures and be the contact between God and Man. While in 1:1-3 the Logos has been described as divine in the highest sense, participating in the creation itself, and in the very nature of God, in 1:14 he is represented as truly human, for he entered the ranks of the human race, without any indication of a laying aside of his deity. He still possessed glory in a unique sense as the "only begotten one." The coming of the Logos into the world is there described not as a birth, in the style of Matthew and Luke, but rather as an "enfleshment," an incarnation, a taking on human form. While John agrees with Matthew and Luke with the central fact of the coming of a new life that could be historically identified as Jesus of Nazareth, he differs from them in leaving aside all details of time and place, of circumstances and personalities involved. Consequently, his is rather a theological interpretation of that significant event, and in this he seems to agree with Matthew 1:23 that Jesus is Emmanuel, "God with us." When we discuss John 1:14, we are immediately confronted with the docetic idea, so characteristic of that day, and common with the various "gnostic" philosophies of the time. Some would understand this verse as saying that the Logos came upon a man, identified with this person for a period of time, and then abandoned the human form prior to the crucifixion by returning to a spirit existence. Docetism (from the Greek verb dokew = "to seem," "to appear") would thus divide the two natures, and deny their true unity in one person, This teaching

in history has taken many forms, and takes many different forms also today. If we take the message of John's Gospel seriously, this is a serious contradiction to the very theme of the Gospel, for to us it seems that the true nature of Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God who became identified with man through the incarnation is the very theme of the Fourth Gospel. As one modern example, Ernst Kasemann, one of Europe's leading exegetes of our time, has argued forcefully that John cannot be thought of as in essential agreement with other early Christians. He has written, "From the historical viewpoint, the Church committed an error when it declared the Gospel to be orthodox." He continues by saying that this Gospel's "acceptance into the Church's canon took place through man's error and God's providence."[22] He is ready to understand the Fourth Gospel in completely docetic terms with emphasis on a kind of existentialist encounter with Jesus today through the kerygna. which apparently precludes a real concern for the Jesus of history, the Word made flesh. At any rate, it greatly diminishes the value of a historical Jesus, as he is concerned with the person of Jesus as exalted, but not primarily as incarnate; as divine, not human.[23] Generally, however, scholars today are less willing to agree with Käsemann's point of view and would prefer to deny any docetic explanation. Raymond E. Brown, "dean" of Johannine interpreters today, is unimpressed by the view that this Gospel was written to refute docetists of some kind. While he assuredly does find features that are anti-docetic, he believes that they are not prominent enough to give us the main motive for writing the Gospel. He writes, "an honest judgment would be that an anti-docetic motif is possible and even probable in the Gospel, but it has no great prominence. "[24] Nils Dahl is even stronger in understanding John's Gospel as opposed to docetism. He thinks that a docetic Christology "may have been supported by allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament. Over against such tendencies, John bears witness to the true humanity of Jesus and to the reality of his death (6:41-42, 61; 19:35)."[25] The reaction of many modern New Testament scholars against Käsemann's docetic interpretation is well summarized, I believe, in the following quotation from Leon Morris: From the evidence, then, it seems that Kasemann is oversimplifying. No one who studies John's Gospel will want to deny that Jesus is there depicted as divine. He is the very Son of God sent to earth to bring about man's salvation. But to say that therefore he is not also very man is to overlook a great proportion of the evidence. There seems no doubt whatever that these scholars are right who see a balance in John between the deity and the humanity. For all its brilliance, there is nothing in Käsemann's study to disturb this conclusion.[26] Not only the prologue, but the entire Gospel portrays the historical man Jesus in a two-fold light without reflection or speculation. He is equal to God; he is indeed God in the flesh; yet he is truly human, as well. Today there is another attractive form of Christology which is called "adoptionism." Those who hold this view teach that Jesus was a man of blameless life who became "adopted" as the Son of God, but his true nature was his humanity. The Gospel of John does not solve the Christological problem. It simply holds together the pre-existence and the real manhood of Jesus, and therefore provides the materials from which traditional Christology could be fashioned, both in the early Church, and right down to our own day. Logos is one

of the chief "tools" in bringing forth this incarnation concept so clearly. It simply states the "divine becoming man" as a theological fact (1:14). The believing Church has tried to explain it ever since. So the first chapter of John appears to be a marvelous microcosm of the Fourth Gospel as a whole, and summarizes the entire sweep of salvation history with which it is concerned. It is a splendid introduction (i.e. "leading into") for the whole of the Gospel.

2.3 Son (of God)

After Logos has been used to introduce the concept of the divine-human gift of God in 1:1-4 and 1:14, it as a term gives way to the term "Son of God." Likely, therefore, John's use of "Son" includes some of the theological ideas which are already behind his usage of "Logos." The "son" image in both the "Son of man" and the "Son of God" terms in this Gospel apparently give strong emphasis to the unique relationship of the Logos to both God the Father, and to humanity. Jesus is frequently spoken of as the "Son of God." In the synoptics this term is used as a synonym for the Messiah (Mark 1:1; 14:61). This is only occasionally the case in John (e.g. 20:31), but in many places his use seems to suggest a view similar to that of Paul, who thought of the Son of God as a supernatural being who had existed in heaven before he came to earth to live among men. This idea is behind some of the references to the Son of man, the one who has descended from heaven and is to ascend to the place from which he came (3:13; 6:62). But distinctive of John's Gospel is the way in which John speaks of "the Son." Four times Jesus is called lithe only-begotten Son" (1:14, 18; 3:16,18). The phrase "the Son,1I without qualification, appears even on the lips of Jesus himself (5:19-23; 6:40; 8:36; 14:13). He claims that those who know him know the Father also (8:19) and that he and the Father are one (10:30). He tells the disciples that the Father is in him and he is in the Father (14:11, 20), that the Father and the Son work together and remain within the disciples (14:34). The "son" image in the Jewish background gives emphasis to the fact that sonship is not by blood relationship, but rather by obedience to God's covenant (Cf. Hosea 11:1; Psalm 2:7, etc.). It may refer simply to the anointed king of Israel, or to one especially selected by God (Cf. II Samuel 7:14). The people of Israel themselves are sometimes called the sons of God (Hosea 1:10). In the hellenistic world, however, this idea was intensified in the direction of a divine being, one especially blessed by the divine with unusual powers. So again the term linked the servant with the divine in an unusual way. Therefore, we can see how natural it was for the early Christians to adopt this title also as a title for Christ to indicate his special relationship to God, especially in terms of obedient service. Paul shows this very clearly in Romans 8:3, "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.. " Jesus proves his obedience to God, and thereby also his true sonship, by accomplishing the work which the father gives him to do (John 17:4). As he is "sent" by God, he is a revealer; as a true

prophet Jesus comes to the world of men in the name of his Father and as his spokesman (John 5:37, 43; 13:20; 15:23). He comes to the human race with the delegated authority of God himself, and is charged with the divine activities of (1) bringing judgment, and (2) giving life (John 5:21-23). In this work the Son and the Father are completely at one. Jesus' authority is his link with the Father, as he works out God's will. The evangelist shows Jesus' dependent obedience, and thereby also his sonship, as perfect (5:30; 8:28; 12:49, etc.). Further, the Son of God is pictured as the true light coming into the world, and thus enlightening mankind. The Son glorifies the Father and the Father glorifies him. This is stated in an introductory way in the Prologue, but in the Book of Signs (the chapters 2-12 are frequently given this designation) we see the works and words by which the Son of God confronted the world as its true light. Even though the world preferred darkness, rejected the light, and even sought to overcome it (1:50), the light continues to shine. Then in the second division of the book (Chapters 13-20 are often called the Book of Glory), the son is presented as he manifests himself to the believers, for only to those who have received him can receive this revelation of himself. Believers see his glory, and in this way the Son's work of self-manifestation has achieved its purpose. So through the use of these Christological titles, we see more and more clearly what the author is trying to emphasize about the person, who is the center of this Gospel. The sonship of Jesus is unique in the sense that he is not only one with humanity, but also one with the Father, He is "from the Father" and "from above" (16:28; 8:23, 26.). In every respect the Son is one with the Father, as well as being one with man. Thus Jesus can baptize with the Holy Spirit, dispense life, and lay down his life and take it again (John 1:33; 10:10, 18). It is significant that in the Gospel the charge that Jesus, in claiming to be the Son of God, is never rebutted. So completely does the Son reflect the Father's character that to see Jesus is to see the Father (14:9). As C. K. Barrett says, "By thus showing its two aspects John brings out more clearly than the synoptists the meaning of sonship; both moral likeness and essential identity are included."[27] Thus it seems that this usage of "Son of God" relates Jesus to God the Father as the "son" by his obedience in service, and also relates to humanity by means of his identification with them in his baptism, and therefore he lives with and for them. His sonship is indeed unique, because he is not only one with men but also one with God. He is "from God," but he lives "for men."

2.4 Christ (Messiah)

The fourth significant title identifying Jesus is the term "Christ, II undoubtedly the most significant of the titles used of him in the prologue. It is used sparingly in the rest of the Gospel. It becomes a key Christological word in the Pauline literature, as well as in the rest of the New Testament. Messiah is the Hebrew word meaning 'anointed' which in Greek becomes 'Christos,' and in English 'Christ.' More important than the work, however, is the idea. We can trace its origin in the Old Testament to the use of the word 'anointed,'

which is used basically in two senses, both denoting offices of divine appointment: 1) Israel as the elect people of God; e.g. in Hab. 3:13, "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thy anointed." 2) The king as preeminently the Lord's anointed, as in II Samuel 1:14, "David said to him, 'How is it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?'" Even a pagan ruler like Cyrus, the Persian, is regarded as selected to do the Lord's will in history in Isiah 45, "Thus says the Lord to his annointed , to Cyrus ... " The word 'anointed,' however, soon acquired a special meaning. In the "Future Coming Age," God would raise up an ideal anointed king . who would deliver Israel and reign in righteousness. Prophecies like Isaiah 9:2-7 and Psalms like Psalm 2, which originally very likely had other applications, came to be understood in the light of this great future hope of deliverance. Even the exile did not quench this hope, as the post-exilic Psalm 89 seems to show. The fourth-century prophet Zechariah painted a new and noble picture of the Messiah as "humble and riding on an ass," who should reign from the river unto the ends of the earth" (9: 9f.) . In the century before the coming of Jesus, a seer who wrote the apocalyptic "Similitudes of Enoch" (depending, of course, on the dating; Charles puts it in the first century B.C.; others now put it in the first century A.D.) pictured the Messiah as a superhuman person, pre-existent with God, who would be manifested as a Judge at the close of history. In the fading days of the Old Testament period, there was no clear or uniform picture of the coming Messiah. A second and greater David, as in Psalm 89, or the so-called Psalms of Solomon, was perhaps the commonest view. Others perhaps expected a militarist Messiah, a second and greater Judas Maccabaeus. Still others dreamed of a supernatural invader from another world. But in all of these, there was one basic idea; that the Messiah, when he came was to be a divinelyappointed head of the People of God, and the bearer of God's Rule to men. John shares with the Synoptists this title of "Christ" for Jesus, but the obvious difference is that the so-called "Messianic secret" of the first three Gospels does not appear in a similar usage in the Fourth Gospel. In the first three Gospels, Jesus is only hesitatingly confessed as the Messiah, and he himself did not openly accept the title, presumably because he wanted to avoid political confusion (Cf. Mark 8:29f. and parallels). But in the Johannine account of Jesus' ministry. the messianic nature of Jesus seems to be openly acknowledged from the very beginning. The first disciples "find" the Messiah (1:41), and later people claim, even at the risk of excommunication, that Jesus and the Messiah may be the same person(7:4lf.; 9:22; 11:27, etc.). Jesus openly tells the Samaritan woman that he is the Christ (4:25, "I who speak unto you, am He"). He informs the man who had been blind that the Son of man (or the Son of God, the Mss. vary) was now talking with him (9:35-37). He gives the people of Jerusalem plain hints that he is the Christ whom they are discussing (7:25-31). In the controversy with the Jews he declares that the scriptures bear witness of him (5:39), that Abraham has "seen his day" (8:56), and that the works which he performed were sufficient evidence that he was the Messiah (10:24-25). After Peter had acknowledged him as the "holy one of God" (6:69), there is no injunction to the disciples to keep silence, as there is so typically in the Synoptics after the incident at Caesarea Philippi (Cf. Matthew

16:20). In John's Gospel this would not be necessary or significant, for Jesus has been recognized as Messiah from the beginning by Andrew (1:41), Philip (1:45), and Nathanael (1:49). Also after revealing himself to the Samaritans, they declare that he is "the Saviour of the world" (4:39). There is no "Messianic secret" in John's Gospel. Theologically, John emphasizes the fact that the messiahship of Jesus, like his glory also, was only hidden from sight by unbelief. In summary, then, we can say that Jesus knew himself to be the Messiah, even in humiliation, during his earthy ministry. This means, at the very least, that he was the person through whom God's rule was being fulfilled. However, in the mind of Jesus, all political suggestions, which became very strong in the inter-testamental period, fall away. His messiahship is conceived in purely spiritual and eschatological terms.

2.5 Conclusion:

Thus we have seen these four key Christological titles used of Jesus in the fourth Gospel show him to be both divine and human. This incarnate Logos came for a reason, to confront people with the divine One. So John's Christology is intimately related to his soteriology: Jesus Christ, the divine One, came to bring salvation to men. The revealing and glorified Sen of man, incarnate Logos, Son of God, and Messiah, Jesus, becomes the final mediator of eternal life. So John's own stated purpose (20:31) is revealed in the use of these titles: but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. As the Gospel develops this theme, Christ as the revealer of the Father is unfolded in terms of the true bread, the light of the world, the life, the resurrection, and the reality of true life in him, to such an extent that he can say, No one comes unto the Father except by me" (14:6). In the succeeding chapters, we shall discuss some of these revelatory images which point to the uniqueness of Christ Jesus, as the Messiah.

Notes

[12]Kyle Yates, Preaching from John's Gospel. Nashville, Broadman Press, 1964, p. 1.

[13]Joseph Crehan, The Theology of . John. New York, Sheed and Ward, 1965, p. 8.

[14]John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According ! John. Trans. W. Pringle, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847. p. 22.

[15]James P. Berkeley, Reading the Gospel of John. Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1958, p.

[16]Augustine, Confessions, VI, v. 8, trans. F. J. Sheed. New York, Sheed and Ward, 1943, p. 112.

[17]Ernst Käsemann, The Testament of Jesus, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1968, p. 16 says: "In the work of this author, christology constitutes the whole of the horizon, with the result that other matters such as pneumatology, eschatology, and ecclesiology find their supporting positions at discrete points, so the speak, along the christological horizon."

[18]The literature on the "Son of Man" theology in John is vast. We refer here to some books and articles in periodicals that seem to be particularly significant: Edwin P. Freed, "The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel," JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE, 86 (1967), pp. 402-409 . John Howton, "'The Son of God' in the Fourth Gospel," NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, 10 (1963-64), pp. 227-237. Elizabeth

Kinniburgh, "The Johannine 'Son of Man', STUDIA EVANGELICA, IV, pp. 64-71. Barnabas Lindars, "The Son of Man in Johannine Christology," in Barnabas Lindars & Stephen S. Smalley, eds. Christ and Spirit in the New Testament (Cambridge: U. Press, 1973). R. Maddox, "The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John, NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, 12 (1965-66), pp. 198-200. F. J. Maloney, The Johannine Son of Man, Rom 1976. I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion," NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, 12 (1965-66), pp. 327-35l. C. F. D. Moule, "Neglected Features in. the Problem of the Son of Man," in J. Glinka, ed., NEUES TESTAMENT UND KIRCHE: FUR RUDOLF SCHNACKENBURG. (Freiburg im Breisgar, 1974). Stephen S. Smalley, "The Johannine Son of Man Sayings," NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, 15 (1968-69), pp. 278-301. Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to John, Vol. I. Especially helpful is Excursus V, which is entitled "The 'Son of Man' in the Fourth Gospel," pp. 529-542.

[19]Robert Kysa TIle Maverick Gospel. Atlanta. John Knox Press, 1976. pp. 34- 35.

[20]Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to St. John, I-XII, Vol I, p. l.

[21]Robert Kysar, Ope cit., p. 25.

[22]Ernst Käsemann, The Testament of Jesus. London, SCM, 1968, pp. 76, 75.

[23] Ibid., pp. 8- 13. Here Käsemann is apparently ready to understand the Fourth Gospel in completely docetic terms. His emphasis on existentialism and the encounter with Jesus today through the kerygma may minimize any real concern for the historical Jesus, the incarnate Word, and in diminishing that historical figure lead almost necessarily to a kind of decetism, in which the person of Jesus as the exalted one, as the perfectly divine one, gives little emphasis to a real incarnation, a real humanity. Both emphases, of course, are necessary to preserve the Johannine "balance."

[24]Raymond E. Brown, op. cit., I, p. lxxvi-vii.

[25]Nils Dahl, "The Johannine Church" in CURRENT ISSUES, 42.

[26]Leon Morris, "The Jesus of Saint John," in UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, Ed. Robert Guelich, 1978, pp. 37-53.

[27]Barrett (1978)C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 2nd ed., 1978, p. 72.

Chapter 3

JOHN AND THE OTHER GOSPELS

To anyone who has some familiarity with the four Gospels, it will be obvious that the fourth Gospel is quite different from the first three in many ways. True, the general message of all four gospels is similar, for they all give the basic sketch of Jesus' life, teachings, suffering, death, and resurrection. But the first three Gospels are much more kindred, and one can even see definite literary dependence between them. Hence they are called "synoptics," because when the contexts are placed in parallel columns in a "synopsis," they can be "seen together" (from the two Greek words compounded: sun = together + opsis = seeing, a sight). But there is no way by which the fourth Gospel could be included in such a harmony for 90% or so of the material has no parallel in the first three Gospels. Even that material which is similar is used by the author so differently that one has difficulty seeing any verbal connection, and certainly one sees different theological applications. If we had only John's Gospel as a source of Jesus' life and ministry, it would be quite a different impression from the one gained by reading the synoptics. Why is this the case? What conclusions can we draw from the similarities (albeit with different style and use) and the omissions between John and the synoptics?

3.1 Similarities between John and the Synoptics:

Some of the material used in John is also used in the Synoptics, but we are alerted to see how differently it is used, to see the unique-ness of John's Gospel. In John there is an account of the work of John the Baptist, although he is never given that title (1:19-36). John is at one with the synoptics in recording the cleansing of the temple, although in John it comes at the beginning of his ministry (2:13-32), rather than after Palm Sunday, as in the first three Gospels. John also records two incidents in the Galilean ministry of our Lord, which are also included in the Synoptics: the feeding of the multitudes, and

the subsequent journey to the other side of the lake (6:1-21). Synoptic sayings may be recognized at 1:22; 1:32; 7:20; 11:2; and the reference to the imprisonment of John the Baptist (3:24) recalls what the Synoptics make a fixed point in their chronology, insofar as they have any. While in John there is no formal description of the Last Supper, several of the synoptic elements are included in John: the identification of a traitor (13:21-30) and the warning to Peter (13:36-38). In common with the Synoptic Gospels John describes the arrest of Jesus, followed by an appearance before the Jewish high priest, a trial before Pilate, the crucifixion, and appearances after the resurrection (chapters 18-20). However, we cannot but be impressed by the unique way in which these incidents are related, for the telling seems to be closely tied to the purpose of John (20:31) in revealing the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God, so that faith in Him might result. When we compare the similarities between John and the other Gospels, it seems most probable that John did not rewrite nor aim to supplement the other Gospels, but rather that he was preserving in his unique way a Christian tradition parallel to theirs.

3.2 Omissions in John's Gospel:

In the fourth Gospel there is no record of Jesus' birth and early years, no account whatsoever of his baptism or of his visit to Nazareth and his rejection by his townspeople there, no reference to his associating with the outcasts of society, 'tax-collectors and sinners,' no statement that he sent out twelve disciples to preach, or that he was 'transfigured' near Caesarea Philippi. None of the Synoptic miracles of healing are included, nor are there any cases of exorcism or the cure of people said to be possessed by demons. Many of the familiar characters of the synoptic accounts are missing, such as the leper who approached Jesus in Galilee, Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, the rich man who wanted to know about eternal life, the one Samaritan leper who returned to Jesus to give thanks, Bartimaeus the blind beggar at Jericho, and Zacchaeus the rich tax collector. But on the other hand, the fourth Gospel introduces new figures, who are elsewhere unknown in gospel history: Nathanael, Nicodemus, a Samaritan woman, a nobleman, and Lazarus. Therefore, it seems quite likely that John was writing independently of the other evangelists, and was drawing on a tradition which all four evangelists held in common. [28] Perhaps the particular Johannine emphasis results because John's Gospel is the distillation of the theological perspective of a community which had access to a particular body of tradition about Jesus, thus explaining the unique material. [29] If we acknowledge this, there are many implications for the fourth Gospel. If John did not depend on the synoptic tradition through the written synoptic Gospels, but rather used his own equally valuable, although similar sources, it is obvious that we will have to take his testimony, as well as the historicity of his account, very seriously. It is no longer possible to say, as used to be said. that the Synoptics are 'history,' and John is 'theology,' so that when John disagrees with the Synoptics, so much the worse for John. Both have to be taken on their own merits. Perhaps we have come to

the stage where we can no longer talk about the "synoptic problem" only. but we have to rather talk about the "problem of the four Gospels," the relation of the Gospels to each other. No longer can John be studied without relation to the other three Gospels.

3.3 Problems of Interpreting John's Gospel:

The very literary nature of the fourth Gospel makes its interpretation very difficult, because of the frequent use of symbolism, dramatic style, unique vocabulary, and even irony at times. The basic question in the exegesis or interpretation of any Biblical text is: What did the ancient author intend to say to his readers at that time? When centuries later we try to answer this question consistently and honestly, we are forced to study the characteristics of the writer to know as much as possible about his style, use of words, and literary characteristics. For example, the "I Am" statements are unique in John, as are the double "Amen, Amen." When we know as much as possible about the author's style and theology, and also about the recipients' understanding, we can only then interpret reliably. This will guard against a rigid literalism, on the one hand, and, especially tempting in the interpretation of John, an allegorical interpretation on the other. Both are hazards that are particularly dangerous in interpreting the fourth gospel. In 1521 the Elector Frederick of Saxony "wished to be enlightened as to the meaning of scripture, and appointed a committee. But the committee could not agree."[30] Thus the Elector was not satisfied. This is often the problem in our own time, for Biblical scholars do not necessarily agree in the interpretation of texts. The profound ideas of John and the unique way in which he records them leads many an interpreter to frustration. But generally, this profound, creative work is deeply appreciated by readers of many levels, although it is difficult to appreciate its wholeness and distinctive qualities without careful study. Being such a masterpiece of literary art, and having such unique inspiration, the Gospel of John has its own special, indispensable values for the Christian fellowship. It is written in its own distinctive manner so that its readers might find that life which is found only in the Son. The author appears to have been selecting from much material that was available to him (Cf. 21: 25, which, while likely in the appendix added later by the church, nevertheless reveals the process which the basic author of the first 20 chapters also used). Having selected his material, the author arranged and narrated it according to his stated objective–namely, that "believing" might be stimulated, guided, and enriched. Also, as has frequently been pointed out, we ought to remember, from the methodological point of view, that when we seek to interpret the fourth Gospel, we are interpreting what is already an interpretation. While this is, of course, true of any New Testament writing, and especially also true of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John has already become colored by the Johannine interpretation of Jesus. This we should recognize as we interpret the Gospel. Since the Gospel is so different from the Synoptic Gospels, not only in subject matter, but also in style and purpose, it is especially important to try to understand the writer, his point of view and

purpose in the Gospel which he presents to us.

3.4 The Practicality of John's Gospel in our Day

Despite the difficulty of interpreting a Gospel which has so much symbolism, unique literary style, and specialized vocabulary, the fourth Gospel remains very popular in the life of the Church, and in the devotional use of individuals and families. How can this be? Is it possible to perceive the spiritual and theological values of the writing without specialized study? This is surely true, and the clear images used to reflect the theological meanings are understood on many levels, even by the unlearned and the person theologically untrained. Surely the pictorial language appeals to people of all cultures and training. "The Good Shepherd" concept is a simple one, speaking to an Asian or African, as clearly as to a European or an American. A. M. Hunter suggests three reasons as to why this Gospel continues to "speak to the condition" of so many Christians of all situations, in spite of the many changes that have been wrought over the nineteen centuries since it was written. [31] We will discuss each of these briefly to try to better understand John's popularity and relevance for us in our own time. 1) It is the Gospel of Life. "These things are written ... that you may have life." (20:31). All religion is a search for life, and John the author believes that God had given life to the world through Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world ... that whosoever believes in Him may have everlasting life." (3:16) .. For the fourth evangelist salvation is life, those who receive Christ receive life. The believer "has eternal life" and has already passed into the new age (3:36; 5:24; 6:54). In Mark, Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God was "at hand" (Mark 1:15), and was in some way actually present among people (Luke 11:20; 17:20-21). John says a similar thing, but in his own way. He used the term "kingdom of God" in only one place (3:3.5), but instead he speaks very frequently of "life" or "eternal life." These two terms are treated as synonymous in the synoptics (e.g. Mark 10:17,24). In John eternal life is spoken of as a present reality, as already the possession of the believer in Christ. Knowledge of God and of his Son, Jesus, gives life (17: 3) . We can well ask, Why did John prefer the term "life" to the synoptic term, "kingdom of God"? It apparently is a deliberate choice by him. Most likely, John, writing to a universal, and especially a gentile church, understood the term "Kingdom of God" as a typically Jewish term, which would not be readily understandable to the non-Jewish readers to whom he is writing. Every person, however, be he Jew or Gentile, would be interested in a message which spoke of "life." "Life," "life in its fulness–that is the desire and cry of every living person. John speaks to that universal yearning in this Gospel. While some writers may consider "faith" as the unifying theme in the Gospel [32], others argue that the Gospel has its integration in the theme of "lire." F. V. Filson, for example, holds that the author of this Gospel makes "the theme of life so central that the Gospel is rightly called the Gospel of Life."[33] Similarly, D. George Vanderlip has also proposed this understanding in his recent, book, entitled "John, the Gospel of Life." [34] To sum up,

whether or not "life" is considered as the integrating theme of the Gospel, it surely does create an interest on the part of the reader to have "life" discussed, and to know that here is a promise of life offered through ,the central person who is revealed in the Gospel. 2) The person and work of Christ is discussed. in depth and this has given the Gospel an enduring value and interest. Since the Christian religion centers in Jesus Christ, a clear discussion of the identity of this Jesus is at the very heart of the purpose of any "gospel." John calls the "mighty works" of the synoptics "signs" in his writing, centering on the idea that they are means of revealing the mystery of Jesus' person, thus revealing God's glory. All four Gospels reveal the same divine Lord to be God's servant. However, John's emphasis is on his unity with the Father. As C. K. Barrett, in commenting on John 12:50, says: "Jesus is not a figure of independent greatness: he is the Word of God, or he is nothing at all."[35] John very clearly presents Jesus as the Son of God, in unity with the Father, carrying out the Father's will, and he is himself the way to the Father. "No one comes unto the Father but by me" (14:5). This emphasis on christology has been the subject of the previous chapter, to which the reader is referred. 3) John's Gospel presents the challenge of Jesus to men existentially, claims Hunter, as the third secret of the continuing relevance of the fourth Gospel.

To think existentially is to think not as a spectator of the ultimate issues of life and death but as one committed to a decision on them: and it is existentialist teaching that knowledge of God and his truth becomes ours only in the act of deciding for it with 'all that in us.'[36]

The Bible is full of existentialism. The Synoptic Gospel parables emphasize Jesus as calling the hearer to respond definitely in what he teaches about the "two ways," and the need to struggle, to wrestle with the decisions, with the choices between God and mammon, and "hear unto action." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!" However, in the dualism of John's Gospel such choices are put in an even stronger perspective: light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death, believing and disbelieving, etc. In the most well known verse of the Gospel (3:16), the alternatives of life and death, believing and disbelieving are given, with the warning that rejecting God's gift of love in Christ may forever forfeit a person's chance of 'eternal life.' Likewise in connection with judgment, John does not present this as a final evaluation, but rather as a present process, even now going on, and people in a sense judge themselves by the faith or unfaith they ha ve in relation to Christ, as the revealed Son of God. "He who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe in him is condemned already" (3: 18) . Faith, too, is understood in this Gospel, not primarily as intellectual assent to teachings, but as personal discipleship, individual reception of the incarnate Logos as God's revelation. "To as many as received him, to those who believed on his name, he gave to them the right to become the children of God"(1:12). By "believing," a person passes from death to life, what Bultmann calls the "transition into eschatological existence."[37] These characteristics of the fourth Gospel have "spoken" to people in every age, and surely also speak to those in our own troubled times.

Notes

[28]The following quotation by Reginald H. Fuller summarizes the shift among New Testament scholars on this question of the independence of John's Gospel:

While holding to the traditional authorship of the Gospel by the Beloved Disciple, the conservatives are coming to recognize that there is a much earlier, perhaps authentic Jesus tradition not only in the narrative portions, but even in the discourses of the fourth Gospel. Yet at the same time these discourses are given full authority as proclamations of the truth about Jesus by appealing to the role of the Paraklete in developing Johannine Theology (John 16:12-15).

Note: The critical shift began with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and with C. H. Dodd, Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1963) and has been continued in Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John. Anchor Bible, Vols, 29 and 29a; Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, 1966, 70). "What is Happening in New Testament Studies?" in St. Luke Journal of Theology, March 1980, p. 99.

[29]Concerning the independence of the fourth Gospel; in relation to the Synoptic Gospels, two influential authors of commentaries on St. John's Gospel write:

"John's independence of the Synoptic Gospels has now been very widely accepted, though often with some modification." ((Barrett, 1978, 42)C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to John, 2nd ed., 1978, p. 42). ". . . There is an increasing number of scholars who think that John was dependent neither on the Synoptic Gospels nor on any of their written sources." (Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John, I, p. XLIV).

"To summarize . . . we believe that the evidence does not favor Johannine dependence on the Synoptics or their sources. John drew on an independent source of tradition about Jesus, similar to the sources that underlie the Synoptics." (Ibid., I, p. XLVII).

[30]Quoted by Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther. Nashville, Abington-Cokesbury Press, 1050, p. 203

[31]A.M. Hunter, According to John, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1968, pp. 103-118 gives an excellent discussion of this subject.

[32]Cf. Everett F. Harrington, John, The Gospel of Faith, Chicago, Moody Press, 1962.

[33]Floyd V. Filson, The Gospel of Life, A Study of the Gospel of John, in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto Piper, eds. W. Klassen and G. Snyder; New York: Harper, 1962, p. 123.

[34]D. George Vanderlip, John, The Gospel of Life.", Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979.

[35]C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, Second Ed., 1978, p. 435.

[36]A. M. Hunter, op.cit., p. 116.

[37] R. Bultmann, The Theo1ogyof the New Testament, II, p. 76.

Chapter 4

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS IN ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

It was Dr. Martin Luther who popularized the term "theology of the cross" (theologia crucis) prior to and in the Heidelberg Disputation in April 26, 1518. He came to this understanding through reflection on the purpose and meaning of the Gospel. Every word of God may be either law or gospel, depending on man's response, he thought, since faith is that existential word-event in which a man is, as it were, lifted out of himself to discover God's "Yes!" hidden beneath His "No!" An experimential theologia crucis thus becomes the characteristic spirituality of all of Luther's doctrine. In the Disputation Luther clearly recognized the diametrical differences between the "theology of the cross" and the "theology of glory," and dissociated himself from the "theology of glory" and accepted the "theology of the cross" as his own approach. He stated clearly at the Heidelberg Disputation:

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."(l)

He maintained that man's native intellect and discoveries do not lead to the knowledge of God. Only the historical realities–the Incarnation and the Word–do so. The theology of the cross shows that we learn to know God rightly only through the cross and suffering. It is beyond dispute that Luther's theology was from first to last a theology of the cross, set explicitly against any vain attempt at a theology of glory (theologia gloria or theologia meiestatis). While his doctrine may have matured much from this early position in 1518, it is clear that he never abandoned his insistence that God will be known only as the crucified God. He understood that in the life of Jesus Christ and in the life of every Christian God is hidden under suffering and tribulation, and therefore cannot be known directly but only indirectly ,not on the basis of sense perception, but by faith only. The dialectic of law and gospel, Christ's strange work and proper office in the Gospel are central in Luther's

emerging theology of the cross. Luther points out that the theologian of the cross takes no offense at the cross as the Jews did, as Paul points out in I Corinthians 1:23, but is content with God's way of disclosing himself. As the Gospel proclaims the crucified and hidden God, the theology of the cross views sufferings, the cross, and death as "most precious gems," in Luther's words. This accords with Paul's thought in Colossians 1:24, according to which the Christian's suffering completes "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. The wisdom of the flesh, human rationality, and the like are understood as the antithesis of the theology of the cross. Any boastful self-reliance and presumptuousness is a theology of glory, while the theology of the cross, according to Luther, is characterized by humility and repentance. Walter van Lowenich in a classic study sums up the theology of the cross under these five headings:

1) It is a theology of revelation, not of speculation; 2) God's revelation is a hidden revelation; 3) Concretely this means that we do not learn to know God through his works, but only through suffering and the cross; 4) Only faith is able to grasp the hidden God; 5) Hence the theology of the cross implies suffering in real life. [38]

Now how does all this relate to the Gospel of St. John and the "theology of the Cross"? Our understanding is that in the Gospel of John we have the definite foundation of Luther's principles of this doctrine. Luther loved the Gospel of John, and devoted much of his Biblical study to it. "St. John is not a Platonist," said Luther, "he is an evangelist.[39] He regarded St. John as "a master above all other evangelists."[40] St. John's he called "the one, fine, true and chief Gospel" and valued it "far, far above" the Synoptics. [41] In terms of sheer bulk Luther's Johannine expositions outweigh his studies of any other part of Scripture, with the exception of the mammoth ten-year lecture series on Genesis. Only St. Matthew's Gospel equals St. John's as a subject for public preaching, and the former was largely based on the "Sermon on the Mount." Between 400 and 500 of his sermons on the fourth Gospel have been recorded209 individual sermons on various texts, 71 pericope-expositions from the Church and House Postils, and continuous serial expositions of chapters 1-4, 6-8, and 14-20 (now printed in English translation in Vols. 22, 23, and 24 of the American Edition of Luther's Works). Subtracting the duplicates, we still have a remarkable total of between a fifth and a quarter of his recorded preaching being from St. John's Gospel. John influenced Luther mightily in his evangelical understanding. In addition to the sermons from the Gospel, there are 23 extant sermons on the First Epistle of St. John, together with a complete exposition of the Epistle in 28 lectures (given, strangely enough, at the University of Wittenberg in 1527 to a handful of students who dared remain behind when most of the University fled to Jena because of an outbreak of the plague). Further, since St. John's Gospel provides the lion's share of the scriptural foundation for the Christological debate, Luther's own handling of these texts aptly illuminates his relation to the Church's dogmatic and doctrinal tradition. His way of teaching the Christian faith was at least as much Johannine as it was Pauline. Very likely, much of his understanding of the "theology of the cross" came from St. John's Gospel, supported by his Pauline understanding. What, then, are some of the points of emphasis in St. John that clearly emphasize a "theology of

the cross"? As we well know, only John among the Gospel writers sees the death of Jesus as his "glorification" (even using the verb doxazein). To clearly show how integrated this whole Gospel of John is with the death of Christ seen as his glorification, we quote the references in the Gospel which point this out:

7:39, "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

11:4, "But when Jesus heard it he said, 'This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it. '"

12:16, "His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him.

12:28, "'Father, glorify thy name." Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

13:31, "When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified."

13:32, "'If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once ...

14:13, "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. .. "

15:8, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit ."

16:14, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

17:1, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify thy son that thy Son may glorify thee."

17:4, "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do;"

17:5, "And now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made."

17: 10, ". . .All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them."

21:19, "(This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God)."

Even in the Prologue, John characteristically expresses what happened in the incarnation of the Logos as the glory of God being seen in the miracle of "enfleshment." "We behold his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14b). The life and death of Jesus are held together in John's Gospel, and what Jesus was and what he did are understood as one thing. Thus it is that John sees the passion and death. as the means of Jesus' glorification. Only because the writer understood the cross as not the end of the story, but only the beginning, could he picture it so. So he can show that the Incarnate Word as the One who reveals the Father is the same Word who is glorified. Jesus rose again; he reigned "from the cross." It is interesting that in the early Christian art, it was quite common to see the crucified Christ dressed in royal robes wearing a kingly crown portraying the theme of victory. However, when St. Francis began to emphasize the humanity of Christ in the suffering and death, we get more of the human suffering aspects pictured by the artists, especially rising to heights in the medieval period. But the theology of the early Church was clear–Christ

even in his suffering and death was the victor. John stands somewhat differently from the Synoptic Gospels in this matter of the cross as the glorification of Christ in a number of ways, which are worth discussing: 1) Much more explicitly and obviously than the synoptic Gospels, John has a theology of the cross. He understands and interprets the death of Jesus from his particular point of view. As we have noticed previously, the absorbing interest of the author of this Gospel is to reveal to the readers the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. With this central christological interest the cross as the glorification also supports his purpose. This, of course, does not mean that John minimizes the cross as such, and the death of Christ involved with it, but rather that he does not concentrate on the cross in isolation from the person and life of Jesus. He does not attempt to work out the basis of soteriology (how we are saved through the cross), as Paul attempts to do (e.g. II Cor. 5:15-21, as "reconciliation"). But rather he shows that because the death of Christ includes his exaltation, Christ is revealed as the Son who "has come from God and was going to God" (13:3), and as a result we can be saved through Him. Consequently, there is the sense in which St. John's Gospel is, as someone has said, "one continuous passion narrative," in which the good news is proclaimed that the crucified Jesus is the glorified Son of God. 2) Corollary to this is the fact that because for John the "glory" of the cross is manifested at the moment of crucifixion, he therefore reports that Jesus died with a word of victory and not defeat upon his lips. The work he had been given to do was finished, and so he said, "'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (19:30). Another contrast with the synoptics is that John has no place for the miracles which the synoptics record accompanied the crucifixion (e.g, the sun darkened, Mark 15:33, the earthquake and opened tombs, Matt. 27: 51-54; the rending of the veil of the temple, Mark 15:38, etc.). For John the crucifixion itself was a self-evident glorification and enthronement, a "lifting up," which carried with it exaltation. This is seen in several revelatory passages, such as, John 3:14, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up ...; 12:32, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself,; (Cf. 8:20, 12:34, etc.). On the morning of the resurrection, therefore, Jesus can speak to Mary of his "ascent" to the Father as both future ("for I have not yet ascended to the Father") and present ("I am ascending to my Father and your Father"(20:l7)). So at one level the "descent" of Jesus to earth and to crucifixion is itself the beginning of his "ascent" in glory. 3) The unique christology of John emerges in his presentation of the death of Jesus, no less than elsewhere in the Gospel, John shows Jesus during his passion, as throughout his life and ministry, as at one with the natures of both God and man. There is not doectism here, nor is there any adoptionism. Jesus' "hour" is an hour of glory, not agony or suffering. He is "in charge" of the passion events, giving himself up to his captors, baffling the procurator Pilate in a theological argument, and going voluntarily to the cross. This is quite a different picture than we get in the Synoptics. As true King, Jesus has the power not only to lay down his life, but also to take it again (10:18). But at the same time, his death was a real death. Even the soldiers had no need to break the legs of the crucified on the cross, because he was "already dead" (19:33); so they pierced his side

instead. So whatever symbolism be read into the "blood and water" which emerge from the spear thrust (19:34), the primary reference of this well-attested fact (John insists that the testimony of the witness is "true," 19:35), seems to be to a physical death. There can be no doubt about the death or indeed the burial of Jesus in John's Gospel. Likewise, after the resurrection Jesus is recognized as the man whose hands and side had been pierced on the cross. He was also the same man who shared a breakfast of bread and grilled fish with seven of the disciples by the sea of Tiberias (20:27; 2l:l2f.). 4) Here we need to say a word about symbolism and sacramentalism in John's Gospel. Some would say that the pattern of the death of Jesus, as understood by the fourth evangelist, is "sacramental" in the Johannine sense of that word, which meant that God worked through creator and the things of this physical world for the purpose of salvation. That is surely true. Is this what we normally understand by "sacramental," however? We well know that the fourth Gospel is full of symbols. Because John thinks and moves so easily on two levels at once, the material and the spiritual, he is quick to evoke a spiritual truth by condensing it into the intelligible form of symbolic language. The motif of "ascent and descent" in John, which we have just noticed–the "ups and downs" of the Gospel–may be said to form a part of John's symbolism. We also see his intended symbolism in his theological contrast between light and darkness (representing evil and death). Similarly the idea of "witness" in the Gospel, which belongs centrally to John's theological conception of the ministry of Jesus as a "trial" (in which the defendant is also the judge), includes an obvious and important quality of his symbolism. Even more obviously symbolical are the images which are used to describe Jesus in the Johannine "I Am" sayings, which are unique to this Gospel. In typically Hebraic fashion the spiritual qualities of Jesus, and thus the real nature of his person, here receive concrete expression. Symbolically, he is presented as the bread of life and the light of the world; the door of the sheep and the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; and as the true vine (6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 11; 11:25, 14:5; 15:1). Symbol and sacrament are closely related theologically, but there is a distinct difference, as well. A symbol, within the Christian context, evokes and represents that which is spiritual and divine. A sacrament actually conveys, through the material elements involved, what is spiritual and divine. John uses much symbolism in his Gospel; however, he makes no direct reference to the institution of, or the clear command to the Church to practice the church's sacraments. In the Gospel, John wants his readers to see that both the human and natural, as well as the divine and the supernatural levels of existence, are important, and that the one level points to the other. It can be said, therefore, that for John everything is potentially sacramental. This may explain why even if he omits such overt references to the Sacraments themselves as the Sacrament of Baptism, or the institution of the Lord's Supper, we cannot conclude from this silence that he wishes to exclude all mention of baptism and the Lord's Supper. But it seems that while a reader may naturally understand the references to the "new birth" (3:3-5) and the "living bread" (6:33, 35, etc.) as references to the Sacraments which would be later instituted by our Lord, John's intended purpose is rather that the whole Gospel be read, and all Christian

experience viewed, with this spiritual and sacramental dimension in mind, i. e., to see the spiritual through the physical elements of creation. In other words, in the incarnation of the Word, flesh becomes the carrier of spirit; in the glorification of Jesus, death becomes the carrier of life. Lazarus was raised to physical life, only to die physically again. But this "sign" was a pointer to the truth which was expressed in the glory of the cross: that for every believer the death and exaltation of Jesus mean life through death, and life beyond death. This is the fulfillment of all signs, by which the glory of God is not only revealed but also given, and given for eternity. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (20:29-31). 5) We noted already that although John is not attempting to explicate a particular theory of the atonement, or in what way salvation through the cross of Christ "works," there are elements in his account of the passion which suggest that he was most familiar with the common Christian tradition of Jesus dying "for" (hyper=in behalf of, for) man's sin. This relates to the main work of Jesus in this Gospel as the "Lamb of God, who bears the sins of the world" (1:29,36), as John the Baptist introduced him. While the Gospel does not specifically treat of the relation of the death of Jesus to the forgiveness of sin, the First Epistle is very explicit in making this connection. I John 2:2 says, "and he (Christ) is the expiation for our sin, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (hilasmos is the Greek word translated "expiation"); I John 4:10 tells us, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that .he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (hilasmos is again the Greek word translated "expiation"). It is interesting that in both main references of the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep (10:11, 15), the Greek preposition is hyper, which means on behalf of, in the place of. This seems to indicate that John understood the death of Jesus as a vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice, a concept which has an important background in the Old Testament. So whether accidental, or perhaps more logically intentional, John's chronology of the passion has Jesus die as the passover lambs are killed. At any rate, as it now stands, John's dating of the crucifixion reminds us of the description of John the Baptist, which appears only in the fourth Gospel, that he was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (1:29, 36). Whatever is the Old Testament theological background of that phrase (and there are differing opinions today), it seems impossible to make any significant meaning out of it without taking into account the probability that Jesus was regarded by the fourth evange as a sacrifice for sin, an echo of the paschal lamb (Cf. Exodus 12:1-27), or the "lamb" of Isaiah 53, as a suffering servant, or more likely, both. [42] It seems quite evident that the idea of Jesus suffering for others vicariously is picked up at various points in the Gospel from the first chapter onwards (Cf. 3:14-16; 11:50-52: note the reference to Exodus 12:46 in 19:36). Others see great significance in the fact that Jesus is described by John alone as bearing his own cross to Golgotha (19:17), seeing in this fact a possible allusion to the sacrifice of Isaac, who himself bore the wood upon which he was to be offered (Genesis 22:6). If this be significant, the sacrificial aspect of the cross of Jesus may be in view here, although we well know that Isaac did not in fact die. The writer of Hebrews sees Isaac as a type of the resurrection of Jesus, Hebrews 11:17-19). It seems more likely, however,

that John's emphasis in on the historicity of Jesus' death, with no mention of Simon of Cyrene (mentioned in Mark 15:21, Matthew 27:32 and Luke 23:26). Jesus died on the cross which he himself carried, according to John, and he was all-sufficient and in "control" of the situation when he was glorified. 6) Having noted that John's christological interpretation of the cross reveals an apparent awareness of the sacrificial nature of the death of Jesus without working out a definite "theology of the atonement," are we to see in Jesus' sacrificial love only an "example" for his disciples to follow, as some would suggest? Does the self-sacrificial love of God seen in the cross give us the Christian basis for Christian discipleship? Historically, Christians have found that such an "exemplarist" view of Jesus' sacrifice needs complementing with a more "objective" view of the atonement, such as Paul so strongly emphasized. This interpretation sees the death of Jesus as making possible the removal of the barrier which separates a holy God and his sinful creatures. John seemingly sees Jesus' death in this way in the Gospel, heaven and earth are finally brought together through Jesus' life and death. Through Jesus there exists for all men the possibility of freedom from darkness and death. And even if John should see in the ministry of Jesus a pattern to follow, he also knows and teaches clearly that eternal life ultimately depends on seeing who Jesus is, and believing, like Thomas, in him as the unique life-giver who "came from God" and "was glorified" (13:15; 34b; 20:26-29).

Notes

[38]Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 31, p. 40.

[39]Walter van Loewenich, Luther's Theology of the Cross, Augsburg, 1976, pp. 19-22.

[40]Weimar Edition, Vol. 10-1, p. 227, line 18.

[41]Weimar Edition, Vol. 33, p. 116, line 26.

[42]Luther's German Bible, p. 6, lines 10, 25. 6. Cf. R. Schnackenburg's excellent discussion of the vicarious sacrifice, op. cit., I, pp. 297-300.

Chapter 5

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

It was a wintry, sub-zero Canadian night when the door bell rang jarringly, and a huge man in a buffalo coat was ushered into the living room and said, "Pastor, Nicodemus came to the teacher, Jesus, by night and now I come to you, a teacher, to ask some questions about salvation." A deep discussion followed concerning forgiveness of sins, new life in Christ and baptismal regeneration. This influential man, leader of a rural Lutheran congregation, a person of high repute, and considered to be very successful in the secular world, now had spiritual problems himself and wanted to ask some spiritual questions. Like Nicodemus, he wished to discuss these basic questions to find peace for his own soul. Jesus' words to Nicodemus, the Pharisee, formed the means by which this disturbed and seeking soul could be pointed to the work of Jesus Christ as our only savior, as he was assured that his baptism into Jesus Christ as an infant in Norway was a real union with Jesus Christ and His body, the Church, and that "as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, to the ones believing on his name" (1:12). This veteran Christian man represented thousands of people who in the vicissitudes of life find doubts arising in their hearts concerning their true relationship of faith in Jesus Christ, who need the assurance that the promises of God, centering in the Gospel of Christ, do not change with the changing times. As Paul says. "God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (I Cor. 10:13) Nicodemus, the Pharisee, a "ruler of the Jews," came to Jesus by night to seek answers to spiritual questions that had been plaguing him. John uses the incident to introduce a significant teaching about eternal life, which follows the dialogue with Nicodemus. John's purpose is clearly seen when after Nicodemus' incredulous remark and crude literal interpretation of Jesus' enigmatic statement about the wind and the spirit (vv. 4-9), Nicodemus drops into the background and nothing further is said about him in the remaining Gospel, except at 7:50 where he is described as one

"who had gone to him before, and was one of theJj1." and in 19:39 where, with Joseph of Arimathea, he gives the body of the crucified a proper burial. Nicodemus seems to stand for official Judaism (v. 10), the common religion of the day. The synoptic Gospels also show how seriously that religion was concerned with this question discussed by Jesus with Nicodemus "What is necessary for salvation?" The question of the rich man, "What must I do to attain eternal life?" (Mark 6:17 & par.), or that of the scholar of the law, "What is the greatest commandment of all?" (Mark 12:28) are the most similar and significant synoptic parallels. Nicodemus here starts with a compliment to Jesus ("We know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him," v. 2) but before he can make any inquiry he is interrupted by a reference to the Kingdom of God. Does this imply a question previously about the Kingdom of God? John gives no record of Nicodemus' original question, but at any rate Jesus tells his nocturnal visitor that salvation is not fundamentally a question of human effort nor the fulfillment of the law, but is rather a question of "spiritual" or "heavenly" birth, or re-creation. Theologically, the answer is of prime importance to the primitive church, for it learned here that salvation is not linked by Jesus with doing or keeping the Law, but rather salvation is received as a gift through God's own love, through the agency of his spirit. But the discussion with Nicodemus is important not only for ancient Judaism, but also for our contemporary discussion as well. "Do gooders" abound today as well as in ancient times, and it is equally difficult for modern people to be the recipients of God's grace. Human nature prefers to "earn" God's grace rather than to be a receiver of God's grace. Jesus understands Nicodemus as being moved by the question which preoccupied all Jews, "What must I do to share in the world to come?" (In the Synoptics the question is usually phrased in terms of "entering the Kingdom of God." Cf. Matt 5:20; 7:21; 18:3 & par.; 19:23f. & par.; 21:31; 22:12; 23:13 & par.; 25:10, 21, 23; Mark 9:47. For "to see the kingdom of God," cf. Luke 9: 27) . The term "Kingdom of God" is used only here (vv. 3, 5) in the Gospel, and may be one of the few synoptic "echoes" of a possible common oral tradition behind the Gospel. The nearest synoptic counterparts of this discussion are in phraseology of "becoming as children" in Matthew (18:3) and "receiving the kingdom as a child" in Mark (10:15). It seems that John, then understands "becoming as children" very realistically as a re-birth, a re-creation, or a birth from above.

5.1 New birth as a religious idea

In recent years the expression "to be born again (from John 3:3) has come into familiar and popular usage. President Jimmy Carter, for example, has referred to himself as a "born-again" Christian. Charles Colson, a member of President Richard Nixon's administration, wrote a book called "Born Again" about his conversion and changed life after the Watergate affair. Later, Billy Graham, who had earlier published a book titled, "Angels," is reputed to have telephoned Colson and asked, "Charles, would you mind if I called my next book,

'How to be Born Again'?" "Not at all," Colson is said to have replied. I'm thinking of calling my next book, 'How to Become an Angel!'" The fact is that these are very popular topics these days. That Colson's book, "Born Again" sold over two million copies and Graham's "How To Be Born Again" also had a very large first edition tells us that religious concern is blowing in the wind these days. According to recent polls, one-third of contemporary Americans say that they have had a "born-again experience, whatever that means to them. We must try to answer the question as to what it might have meant to Nicodemus in our original text as spoken by Jesus. "New birth" is not foreign to the Judaism of Jesus' day, nor to the Greek mystery religions. Let us look at the Old Testament Scriptures for some examples of the idea of new birth, or birth by the spirit of God, which Israel was expecting. The expectation in the later Old Testament was that spiritual rebirth would come one day to the nation that was considered as spiritually dead. In Ezekiel 36:25-27 we read expressions like "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses"; "a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you"; in Ezekiel 37:11-14 we note a similar expression, "And I will put my spirit within you, and you shall life." Hosea 6:2 says, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." In Isaiah 55:3 new life is promised in the words, "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David." Yes, Judaism did have the promise of new life to come through God's spirit! The Essenes also spoke to their initiates of being "born from above," as we see from the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Manual of Discipline, ritual washing is described as useless while spiritual apprehension is extolled, if it is accompanied by an inner change of heart:

Anyone who refuses to enter the (ideal) society of God and persists in walking in the stubbornness of his heart shall not be admitted to the community of God's truth ... He cannot be cleared by mere ceremonies of atonement, nor cleansed by any waters of ablution. . . . For it is only through the spiritual apprehension of God's truth that man's ways can be properly directed. Only by a spirit of uprlghtness and humility can his sin be atoned. Only thus can it really be sanctified by waters of purification. [43]

Even in the mystery religions there was a common idea which claimed that adherents could be "reborn intb eternity" through an initiation ceremony and a resulting mystical contact with a god. Some or all of these connections may have been in the mind of John the Evangelist and his first readers when they heard about "birth from above. John may also have been thinking about Jesus' teachings, recorded in the synoptics, already referred to, about the necessity of starting a new life, of "becoming as little children," in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Today in Moslem countries, the practice of ritual washing is still practiced. For example, outside the EI-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and outside the Omayyad mosque in Damascus, most tourists have seen Moslem men stop at a large fountain with several spigots, and at one of these turn on the water and wash their faces, hands and feet before entering into the mosque to pray. The water does not, in their belief, itself cleanse spiritually, but it symbolizes repentance and confession of sin. Nicodemus had also heard

of the "baptism of repentance" of John the Baptizer, but as a whole the Pharisees had been unwilling to submit to John's baptism and generally resisted his message. However, there could be no doubt in the mind of Nicodemus what is meant by being born of water. As a student of the Old Testament law he knew about the promises of future cleansing by God's spirit. The baptism of John the Baptizer was an insitution known to all religious leaders of the time. The first step for Nicodemus would be to openly become an adherent of John's revival with its mission of repentance, in which the authentic voice of prophecy was sounded after so long a silence. But even that is not enough– it is only the first step. John the Forerunner was greater than all those prophets before him, yet even so he was not as great as the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, said Jesus (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28). To enter the Kingdom something more is needed than adherence to John the Baptizer. One must do what Jesus' disciples had done, openly seek John's baptism and then publicly join this community of disciples among whom the power of the new birth, the new life, is moving. If its source is flesh, it remains at that level. If its origin is spirit, that quality will be apparent in it, says Jesus. This means a "birth from above."

5.2 Born from above (3:3)

In the preceding verse, Nicodemus has referred to Jesus' credentials as a teacher who, because of the works he had done, had shown that he was "sent from God." In reply to that compliment, Jesus states that the Kingdom of God is open only to those who have the same divine origin. For to be born from above is equivalent to being born from God, in John's imagery. How, then, should we translate these controversial Greek words, gennaw anothen? There are three meanings possible grammatically, for anothen: 1) from above, 2) from the beginning, and 3) once more, again. Many of the Latin church fathers understood it in the sense of a second birth, or "again."[44] On the other hand, most of the Greek church fathers, as well as many modern scholars, insist that it must be a divine or spiritual birth, a birth "from above."[45] Still again, one of our most helpful modern commentators, C. K. Barrett, represents another group of modern scholars who would insist that the author used a "deliberate ambiguity" and intended to emphasize both meanings. [46] We cannot decide the question finally here, except that we wish to point out that the use of the word anothen elsewhere in the Johannine literature (Cf. 3:31; 19:11, 23) and the Johannine doctrine of "birth from God" (e.g. 1:13; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1) would argue very strongly for the understanding "from above," or a spiritual birth. [47] Thus we can understand Jesus' words here not to be directly concerned with baptism as such, whether that of the Old Testament lustrations or of John the Baptizer's baptism of repentance, but rather with the new creation by the Spirit of God. The apocrypha and the rabbinical writings show that these ideas of a divine renewal were very common in the time of Jesus. So Nicodemus could very honestly have understood Jesus' words as affirming the absolute necessity of a person's being cleansed and totally transformed by God, if he/she were to reach the Kingdom of God.

When we add verse 5 to verse 3, it appears that John is speaking of two kinds of birth. When he speaks of being "born of water" (v. 5), it could, of course, be understood as baptism, either that practiced then by John the Baptizer, which Nicodemus, as a Pharisee, would probably have scorned. On the other hand, if it is intended to refer to Christian baptism, as practiced by the church at the writer's or editor's time, it would be an anachronism– reading back into Jesus' teaching a practice that was later recommended by him, and practiced by the church at a later time. The later church, of course, would naturally see that "spiritual birth" was promised in connection with the Sacrament of Baptism which Jesus later instituted, and would make that identification. But is this what Nicodemus should have understood when he first heard the words? Unquestionably, "spiritual birth" later came to be connected with the Sacrament of Baptism as a regenerative act (Cf. Titus 3:5). If the Gospel went through several stages of redaction or editing, it is easy to see how this understanding could later be read back into the teaching of Jesus originally spoken to Nicodemus, at a time prior to the institution of Christian baptism. The important theological point is that whatever translation be preferred foranothen the new birth has only one source, and that is outside of man. A person can never accomplish this birth for himself/ herself as even Nicodemus understood in his "earthly" understanding when he quickly pointed out, "How can a man be born when he is old .... :" We have no more control over our spiritual birth than we did over our physical birth. It is something God alone can do. But we are embarrassed by this phrase, "born again." What shall we do with it? Since it is a saying of our Lord, we must take it seriously. We can pretend it doesn't exist, and ignore the exclusive statement, "except .... " We can leave it for the "revivalists" to talk about over religious television and radio. Or we can struggle and strive with this expression until the meaning begins to break in upon our minds and lives. We can't relinquish this text of Jesus to the sectarians! We can't disregard it and leave it to others to interpret as they see fit. With these words Jesus plunges beneath the surface and asks us to grapple with the essence of the Christian experience. It must have a meaning for every Christian, of whatever doctrinal conviction. "Born again ..." "Born from above." Obviously in the setting this means a radical reorientation in our lives. Can people really be changed. "Can the leopard change his spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23). Can the old become new, or are people "frozen" into some "status quo" that can never be changed? If change in human nature is not possible, then we're stuck with this monstrous evil in the world on our hands, and the devil is really in control of this world. From our experience, however. we know this is not the case, for we have seen many people changed dramatically by the power of the Gospel. The message of the New Testament is that people can be changed. "If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" says St. Paul (II Cor. 5:17). From within John's Gospel Jesus helps us to see that if we repudiate the possibility of radical change in the quality of life, we repudiate God himself! For then the present situation in the world is the best that God can do. Who wants a God like that? Jesus, however, insists that hope for the present and the future rests in the possibility of a dynamic reorientation in the lives of individuals and their communities

as well. There is a "birth from above"! And these renewed individuals can, as leaven, gradually penetrate this world with the message of new life. C. S. Lewis once compared this qualitative kind of change to the development of an egg. New life, he said, must hatch out of an egg, or the egg will begin to decay and stink. In the same say, a Christian cannot attempt to preserve his/her Christian heritage of faith as it is or was. It will begin to smell unless a really different kind of life emerges from it. There must be growth out of the shell! Verses 3 and 5 are to be considered as parallels. Jesus challenges Nicodemus about his need for that genuine faith which is the work of God's Spirit. Jesus then speaks about the condition of a life of faith and expresses it as 1) a birth from above, and 2) a birth of water and Spirit. This life of faith is like a new birth for it is an initial communication of new, divine life that brings one forth as God's child (1:12). More specifically, it is a new relationship with God through the Logos (Jesus), one not previously experienced. [48] One important grammatical characteristic in verse 5 ought to be noted, however. Water and spirit are obviously considered as one idea, as there is only one preposition in the original text (Greek=ek). It is therefore not "born of water but of spirit," but rather "born of water and spirit," the two nouns being governed by the one preposition, and therefore originally regarded as a unit.[49] However this be understood, it involves a radical break with the past, and opens up a new chapter of life characterized by the control of the spirit. "Born of water and spirit" leads into the next discussion on the distinction between life in the flesh and life in the spirit. The power of this new birth is the Spirit, not a component of man, but coming from outside of man. The person born from the flesh is a person as he/she is by nature, impelled by the forces of his/her own natural endowment. But the person born from the Spirit is a person as he/she is when open to the influence of God, with all his/her natural forces brought under the control of the Spirit. In Romans 8:1-17 Paul concurs with John in indicating the powerful change of the person controlled by the Spirit of God. "There is no condemnation" for such ones "who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Further he says, "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." As an Evangelist John follows through on the idea of the Spirit-controlled life in chapter 3, vv. 6-8, informing us of the nature of God's spirit. The interesting play on words in the Greek text of this passage cannot be seen in the English translation because we have three English words which are all involved in the Greek word pneuma (cf. our English word, "pheumatic"). Pneuma can mean breath (probably from an old Norse word root from which we also get "burn"). But pneuma can also mean wind, (from the Latin ventus). But most important of all, it can also mean spirit (from the Latin spiritus, meaning basically "breath" in Latin). Furthermore, the Begrew word ruach, which is most commonly translated by pneuma in the Greek Septuagint, also has these three meanings in the Old Testament: breath, wind, and spirit. So when Jesus is here quoted as saying, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes, or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit of God," he capitalizes on this play on words. Not only does Nicodemus need this birth from above, but every reader of the Gospel also does if God's spirit is to control

him/her. After this initial discussion, Nicodemus quietly disappears, and the rest of the discussion is a monologue. This is a typical Johannine style of discourse, in which the evangelist gives us the fruit of his own deep reflection on the meaning of Christ's teachings. Nicodemus represents official Judaism in a situation of openness before the claims of Christ to discipleship. He may have been (he undoubtedly was) a historical character, but he is used by the author to introduce a discussion on the great theme of the Gospel, salvation by faith in Jesus the Christ alone. As the monologue continues, the author seems to be thinking as much of the testimony of his fellow Christians (cf. v. 11, "we speak. .") as he does of the teaching of Jesus. When John uses this first personal plural pronoun "we," he is speaking for the group of the apostles, of whom he is likely one of the last survivors. He also uses this same style in the opening of the First Epistle (1:1-4), though there he immediately goes on (v. 7) to identify himself, and his fellow apostles (by implication) with the Christian community to whom he is addressing the Epistle. The theme of "birth from above" is now dropped and the subject is the Son of man and belief in the Son of God. In verse 13, the Son of man is apparently the same theological concept as the Logos of the prologue, only now the Son of man is introduced in reference to the historical incident of Moses and the brazen serpent in the period of the Exodus. There was a plague of serpents which came upon the Israelites and Moses made a brazen image of a snake and set it up high for all to see. Those who looked upon it were said to be cured (Numbers 21:1-10). The "lifting up" of the Son of man is the crucifixion of Jesus, which in John's Gospel is understood as his exaltation and glory (cf. 8:28; 12:32). In verse 15, we have the term "eternal life" used in the Gospel for the first time. The present judgment, rather than a future one, is also introduced in Johannine style (3:18-19), and the contrast between light and darkness (cf. 3:19-21; cp. 1:5, 9) is repeated in several other places in the Gospel. True faith comes from seeing God's revelation in Jesus, and though that can also be seen in the signs if they are properly understood, it comes primarily through Jesus' revealing word. Thus we see how important Nicodemus as a person is to John the Evangelist. He comes to Jesus secretly with a faith, or at least an honest seeking curiosity, based on the signs which Jesus had done, but he seems to find difficulty in accepting the revealing word with which Jesus challenges him.

5.3 "The Little Bible"

John 3:16 is sometimes called "the little Bible," because this verse summarizes the entire Biblical teachings of Jesus Christ as the only Savior of the world. Martin Luther interpreted these words as picturing the person of the giver (God Himself), the cause or motive (divine love), the gift (His Son), the way the gift was made (agonizing death), to whom it was given (the world), the fruit of the giving (eternal life), and the manner received (by faith alone). Here we have the Gospel of God in miniature. The free, unlimited offer of salvation to all who believe reveals the true heart of the Father and the Son, who make eternal life

available to all who will appropriate it in simple trust. It is restricted, however, to those who believe, while condemnation is connected with the absence of such faith (v. 18). We should also note that this universal will of God to save, which is so obvious here ("but that the world might be saved through him" in v. 17) also distinguishes Christianity from Gnosticism, where salvation is restricted to persons capable of receiving it (the "gnostics" are those "able to know"). In contrast to all forms of dualism John affirms that God wills the salvation and not the destruction of the "world," the well-being of all people, and not just those of a privileged section of mankind. Paul also summarizes this great theme beautifully in Romans 8:32, "He spared not his own son, but delivered him up to the death for us all." The Father gave the son! What a striking thought! God gave him up to death as a sacrifice of love. The Son gave himself to be an offering for sin., No wonder the Logos doctrine was so carefully presented in order that we should recognize the deity of Jesus who is the offering for our sins. Jesus has the unique position of being one who has come from heaven (v. 13), and so of being the revealer of God. Jesus reveals this love of the Father God not so much by his teaching as by his action, for the cross is the supreme act of revelation which leads to belief and so secures salvation (vv. 14-15). O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, That in thine ocean depths its flow May richer, fuller be. (George Matheson, LBW 324) Here we have the central doctrine of Christianity, the heart of the Gospel by which we live and die. It does not say as I John 4:16 does, "God is love," which is, of course, certainly a precious truth, but it does show that love is in action for us. It says rather that "God so loved . . . that he gave...," showing the dynamic power of love and the cost to the Father's heart. He gave! It was an act, as I John 4:9 states, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, that we might live through him. The breadth of God's love is the world of mankind for whom Christ died. The depth of his love is his most precious gift, his only beloved Son, whose whole life, and most especially his death, reveals how much God wants to share his own "eternal life" with us all. The rest of this text deals with "life through him." God not only loves the world, but he has a special concern also for his disciples. In 13:lb we read, "... having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end," and later in the same chapter in the Last Supper discourse, he says, "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35. Cf. also 15:12, 17 where it is repeated). As the Father has shown us, the characteristic of the life of faith is love. This love is not only for our fellow disciples, but also for the entire world. Jesus' coming into the world, also called the shining of the light, evokes a double response, according to 3:18-21. The majority of people remain incredulous while others respond in faith. Faith is described as a "coming to the light" or "doing the truth," which means making this truth of Jesus, as God's revealed Son, a part of one's own living. "Works then become personal responses of faith, such as listening to the word of Jesus, seeing Jesus as the Son of God, confessing faith in Him, and living in communion with God through Jesus. These

are not to be identified with meritorious "good works" in the Pauline sense, for all of this is God's work through the revelation of his Son. Faith is thus, according to John, an internal self-appropriation of the meaning and message of Jesus who is the truth (3: 21) and the self-revelation of God. So faith is seen as man's active response to Jesus as the true revealer of God who communicates what he experiences in -his intimate life with the Father. As one who knows God he speaks to humans God's own truth, not just the truth about a person's own destiny and life of faith (which John calls "earthly things") but also the mystery of his own person ('heavenly things"). For no human being is able to know and reveal these "heavenly" things except the perfect revealer who came from God to reveal his own life with the Father (v. 12). But on the other hand, the negative response to Jesus is judgment or self-condemnation, for to reject Jesus's claims is to alienate oneself from a life-giving communion with the light. The reason that people do not believe in Jesus, or come to the light, is because they have made a deliberate choice against Jesus which is shown in their negative responses, such as the refusal to accept his work and to acknowledge faith in Jesus as the Son of God (cf. II John 7). Moreover, because they are not willing to come to the light who is Jesus (3:20), they do not see the evil of their own unbelief. The discussion with Nicodemus about new birth and new life led to quite a revelation about Jesus as the Life-giver. Spiritual life is not inherent in any human being, but is a gift from the Spirit of God. It results in a new kind of life with new goals, new purposes, and new life styles. What a privilege to receive the "birth from above"!

Notes

[43]Theodore H. Gaster, trans., The Dead Sea Scriptures in English translation. Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1957. From the chapter on "The Manual of Discipline," pp. 47-48.

[44]It is so understood by Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Augustine, Jerome, and, of course, many modern interpreters. There are two ostensible reasons in favor of this option: a) the misunderstanding on the part of Nicodemus in v. 4; and b) the widespread Hellenistic notion of "rebirth" which is illustrated in the N.T. itself in I Pet. 1:3, 23; Titus 3:5.

[45]Greek church fathers such as Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Chrysostom, and many modern-commentators argue for "from above."

[46]C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 2nd ed. 1978, p. 205.

[47]R. Schnackenburg and Raymond E. Brown in their commentaries both argue that the "primary" meaning must be "from above," meaning a birth from God. Schnackenburg, 1., p. 367-368; R.E. Brown, I, p. 130.

[48]The authenticity of the words "water and" has often been challenged on the grounds of their being due to an "ecclesiastical" redaction, but without sufficient grounds. Textual criticism provides no reason for doubting that they have always belonged to the original text of the Gospel. In fact, Metzger, Textual Commentary on the Greek New - Testament, p. 203, does not even recognize an alternate reading. And C. K. Barrett (op. cit.) says, "There is no textual ground whatever for the omission of 'water and' as an interpolation; they are undoubtedly the work of the writer who published the gospel, and must therefore be interpreted as part of the text" (p. 208).

[49]This modified dualism is very similar, but yet not identical with the doctrine of the Two Spirits in the Dead Sea Scrolls. But the contrast is not between the flesh and spirit, but between flesh under the control

of the spirit of error, and flesh under the control of the spirit of truth. But it is still a matter of influence over the whole person. The similarity is seen in the following quotation: "Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness." (IQS 111:19. Vermes, translation). So the fundamental difference between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament is that in the N.T. the Spirit of Truth (light) is always identified with the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God, whereas in the Scrolls it is equivalent to an angel, and sometimes even referred to as such.

Chapter 6

LIVING WATER

Because of the jealousy of the Pharisees over Jesus' growing popularity, Jesus left Judea to return to Galilee. The synoptic Gospels give an additional reason, the arrest of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas, who was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Herod likely was at Machaerus, a fortress east of the Dead Sea, where the Baptist was imprisoned. So Jesus left the vicinity to get as far as possible from this wily ruler, while still remaining in his domain. The religious leaders in Jerusalem, blinded by prejudice, pride, and willful sinfulness, stubbornly refused to recognize Jesus' ministry as from God. John notes that Jesus "had to pass through Samaria" (v. 4). This was the normal route to take from Judea to Galilee. When Jews traveled northward they usually avoided the country of the Samaritans by going through Perea, an area east of the Jordan River. This was because the Samaritans might abuse anyone passing through their land and journeying to Galilee, because of an old enmity. Jesus chose, however, the road they would not normally take as a protest against their reason for not taking it. It would prove to be an indication of the inclusiveness of his Messiahship. The hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans probably dated from the conflicts between the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel. It was enhanced following the fall of the northern kingdom (in 722 B.C.), when the few Israelites who were left in the land intermarried with imported foreigners to produce the Samaritan people. The opposition of the Samaritans to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity added further to this hostile relationship (cf. the Book of Nehemiah). Does John's note as to the necessity of Jesus going through Samaria denote a geographical or a spiritual meaning or both? Was it that the necessity lay in the experience with the woman which awaited him there, so that he could reveal himself as the Savior of the world? This is consistent with John's usual technique, when he regularly introduces an incident in order to further discuss a spiritual revelation. Jesus arrived at Jacob's well near Sychar, a village located about forty-two miles north of Jerusalem at about noon (the "sixth hour" in Roman reckoning). This would be the hottest part of the day, the most unlikely time ordinarily to be drawing water. The fact that the woman came at noon is

probably an indication that she was a woman with a bad reputation, who would avoid mingling with the other women during the morning or evening when normally they would come to draw water, and thus avoid their scorn and contempt. The disciples had gone into the village to buy food while Jesus was alone, resting by the well. Then a woman came out of the village to draw water. Jesus was thirsty after his travels, but he was as always concerned with the woman as a person as well. Jesus treated this woman, who proved to be a social outcast, with as much consideration and concern as he had shown the respected Jewish leader, Nicodemus. In spite of this woman's bad reputation (as it turns out) and social rejection, Jesus chooses her as the recipient of his second great lesson in this Gospel. Here was seen the pure grace of God who is the giver. John in all his narratives makes it clear that the initiative lies with Jesus. It is a dramatic scene. This simple request, "Give me a drink" (v. 7) began one of the classic soul-winning efforts of all time, surely the finest example we have in the New Testament. In Jerusalem Jesus had dealt with Nicodemus, an honored and respected religious leader in Jewish society. But here he is dealing with a woman of ill-repute in the hated (by the Jews) Samaritan society. We see mingled tact and condescension. The love of God is so completely universal, yet so beautifully and completely individual that for the moment she becomes the center of Jesus' ministry. Augustine expressed it well in his famous sentence, "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love!" Truly, before God there is no one who is lost in the crowd. As Jesus deals with her he led her from scorn, to curiosity, to deep interest, to respect, and finally to faith itself. What an example! The woman met Jesus' simple request with a question, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (v. 9). It is very likely that she pronounced the word "Jew" with scorn. Her answer revealed the prejudices of race, religion, and sex. But Jesus brushed those prejudices aside as He offered her "living water" (v. 10). This aroused her curiosity. How could he give her this water, since he had nothing with which to draw it from the well (vv. 11, 12)? As to be expected, she was thinking of natural physical water. Jesus struck a note of interest when he told her that if she drank of the water that he gave she would never thirst again (vv. 13, 14). Remembering the long walk from Sychar she said, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw" (v. 15). She was thinking of her physical, not her spiritual need. But there is something far worse than a thirsty throat; it is a thirsty and parched heart. Jesus appeals to the inner craving everyone has for ultimate rest and satisfaction in life. Jesus does not demean her, he does not frighten her off, and now it is she who is asking a favor of him! As he probed more deeply, he revealed his knowledge of her sinful life (vv. 16-18). Jesus addresses himself to her conscience: "Go, call your husband, and come here" (v. 16). Immediately she is evasive; she wants no interference from him along these lines. She thinks she is an emancipated woman, and says, "I have no husband." Instead of being deterred, Jesus replies, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." The woman is amazed. This show of knowledge by Jesus generated her respect as she says,

"Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet" (v. 19). But to escape this embarrassing subject of marriage she resorted to the religious controversy as to the true place of worship, Mt. Gerazim or Jerusalem, a subject that was currectly burning between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jesus circumvented the controversy by teaching her the true nature of God and of worship. She did not argue the point further. Instead, she adopted a delaying tactic by pointing out that when the Messiah (in whom the Samaritans also believed) comes "he will show us all things" (v. 25). Jesus brought the matter to a startling head by answering, "I who speak unto you am he" (v. 26). With this revelation, she became woman of faith. She ran to the village to tell others about him, saying, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ (Messiah)?" She put her expression of faith in the form of a question simply to avoid the criticism of the men of her village. In the meantime the disciples had returned to Jesus and wondered that he was talking to this woman (v. 27). He replied by pointing out to them the rich harvest of souls which was waiting to be gathered even now (vv. 31-38). A token of this harvest was seen in the group which arrived at the well from Sychar (vv. 39-42). At their request Jesus remained in their village for two days. Sychar experienced a great religious experience as seen in the people's statement to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world" (v. 42) Jesus is seen not as the savior of the Jews, or of the Samaritans only, but as the "Savior of the world." This narrative is an instance of the difficulty of deciding whether in John's Gospel the incident itself is of primary importance, with the teaching appended, or whether the teaching itself is the important factor, with the narrative used only as providing an occasion for the teaching. The incident here has no parallel in the synoptic Gospels, although there are indications in Luke that Jesus' attitude towards the Samaritans was different from that of his Jewish contemporaries. For example, in Luke 9:51-56, he refuses to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. In Luke 10:29-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan holds up the Samaritan as an example of concern for another. Perhaps John also intended to show Jesus' more tolerant attitude toward non-Jews than his contemporaries. The record is not, however, without difficulties. There was nobody present to hear the conversation between Jesus and the woman, which is given in such detail; the disciples had gone into the town to buy food (which seems a most unlikely proceeding in itself and one which seems to be inconsistent with the author's note in v. 9b), and did not return until the talk had concluded (v. 27). Jesus is said to have stayed in Samaria for two days and the Samaritans accepted him as "the savior of the world" (w. 39-43). This seems to be the language of Christian theology of a later date; the phrase occurs in the New Testament only here and in another Johannine writing, I John 4:14. The welcome given to Jesus here is in contrast also to the reception that his messengers received in Luke 9:52 and there is no evidence from the synoptic that Jesus ever preached to the Samaritans (cf. Matthew 10:5, where Jesus forbids his disciples to do so). But whatever historical basis there is for the narrative, John uses the occasion to introduce some of the leading ideas of this Gospel.

6.1 Symbolism in St. John

John is full of symbolic words and phrases. It is not always clear what his intended meaning is. Water in this chapter stands for the old form, Judaism, as in chapter 2 at Cana (2:6), while Jesus' teaching is of a new spring of "living" (that is, running) water, superior to the well water of Judaism (cf. v. 14; cf. 7:38). The religion of the Samaritans is criticized also. When Samaria was taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., the immigrants are said to have come from five districts and to have brought their own gods with them (II Kings 17:24 identifies these five regions as Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim). Like the woman and her five previous husbands, the Samaritans had eventually rejected them all and now claimed to be worshiping Jahve. John points out that even this is not true marriage (common metaphor in the Old Testament for the service of God); the religion of the Jews, in spite of its defects, is superior to the others (v. 22), although it must itself give way to "true spiritual worship" (vv. 23-24). John also includes here other aspects of the presentation of Jesus in this Gospel that he was tired and needed to rest (v. 6), that he declared himself to be the Messiah (v. 26), in contrast to the reticence in the synoptics with their typical "Messianic secret" emphasis, and that as the Logos he knew about people's character without being told (vv. 16-18, 38). The statement about "four months and then harvest" in v. 35 may be a proverbial saying, inculcating patience in waiting for the harvest after the period of sowing. It is not necessarily intended as an identification of the season of the year here. John thinks of the early apostles as well as the church of his own day as sharing in both the sowing and the reaping. The harvest is already present. It may well be that the dominical saying in Luke 10:2 lies behind this saying, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

6.2 The Dramatic Style of St. John

John the Evangelist employs a unique dramatic style in his writings. A dramatist in dealing with a historical person or situation, may keep more or less strictly to a standard tradition of events, but yet feels free to adapt this tradition for his own purposes. For example, the recent television presentation of "Masada," which was based on the novel, "The Antagonists," by Ernest K. Gann, was an adaptation of the few extant historical events of the post-destruction period of Jewish resistance. The author, however, for the sake of dramatic interest, introduced characters who had no actual historical existence at all, at least not in the only record available, namely that of the Jewish historian, Josephus.[50] But the author composed speeches for these created characters, the substance of which expresses his own ideas as much as those of the speakers themselves. Perhaps the author does express likely happenings and speeches, and love stories of that very critical period of Jewish history under Roman domination. Another example would be T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, which treats of the events leading up to the assasination of Thomas

Becket. So while the archbishop's sermon on Christmas Day 1170 A.D. is actually Eliot's original composition, it may yet be said to express in general terms at least the position of Becket himself. So any good poet or dramatist will use the historical facts to bring out what he or she feels to be the meaning of the story for today. In like manner, John writes with the interpretation of a dramatist, clothing the historical facts with a beautiful dress, rather than trying simply to give an objective portrait. Among the Greeks of this time, the drama was a characteristic form of expression. We know that every significant Greek city had its theater where the life and thought of these people were set forth both in comedy and in tragedy. At the theater they listened to the masterpieces of the best Greek minds. And the viewer had to use his mind to react to the presentation in support or in disagreement. Hence the theater in Hellenistic times was a most powerful educational tool as used by the political and social leaders. In a similar situation, the Christian Gospel had to address itself to society, not in mere imitation or rivalry with the theater but with new, creative, and life-giving literature. The fourth Gospel attempts to do this, and is successful in a remarkable way. It presents Jesus with dramatic skill, inviting the reader to react positively to the presentation of the claims of Jesus' divinity. It is not a drama in the technical sense of the word, in that there is not thought of a stage or of the presentation of the drama before an audience. Yet in nature and structure this book is true dramatic tragedy. The writer was an inspired genius who senses profoundly the dramatic character of human experience, and especially of the incarnate life of Jesus in particular. He felt deeply the tensions of opposing forces, the intensity of the conflict, and the agony involved in the rejection and persecution of the Messiah. Light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hatred, life and death are the opponents. "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (1:11). This is the tragedy presented in John's Gospel. The reader is invited to consider the evidence given by a series of witnesses and by the claims of Jesus Christ himself, and then make a judgment about whether "Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. . . ." (20:31) However, in John's Gospel, the drama is transformed. The Greeks knew only Fate and a bitter end to the agony, however heroic a character might be. The knowledge of the Son of God changed this. Light is commanded to shine forth out of the darkness to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, his Son (as Paul describes it in II Corinthians 4:6). All things are made new in him (again Paul in II Corinthians 5:17). The word of the Son of God spoken to Greek drama is, "You must be born again" (3:7). The Gospel of John sets forth the tragedy of the conflict between light and darkness, but carries it through to the victory. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," cries Jesus Christ to his disciples in his last discourse (16:33). The last word in the drama is a glorious beautitude spoken to Thomas and his fellow disciples, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe" (20:29). In the 4th chapter of John, the enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, and the sexual, social and racial barriers are overcome in a dramatic sequence of events in the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well of Jacob. As we have now seen in outline the basic message of this section of the Gospel, let us now look at some of the particular nuances which John uses

to bring his point to us.

6.3 The Samaritans and the Jews

Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was captured by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The Samaritans of the time of Jesus were the descendants of the Hebrew inhabitants who were left after the majority of the people had been deported to Mesopotamia. But the conquerors had populated the country with settlers from Assyria and Babylon. (II Kings 17:24 tells us that these immigrants were from "Babylon, Cutah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim.") The worship of Jahve was continued after the exile, but in a form which the Jews of the southern Kingdom considered to be debased. On the return of the Jews from the Exile in Babylon, the Samaritans offered to help them rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, but this offer was refused (520 B.C.) (cf. the Book of Nehemiah). Alexander the Great had allowed the Samaritans to build their own temple on Mt. Gerazim (cf. v. 20), but this temple had been destroyed in 110 B.C. by the Jewish king, John Hyrcanus. There were therefore very bitter feelings between the Jews and the Samaritans that had been seething for centuries, and they avoided each other as much as possible, as we have already said. This is why the Jews normally made a detour east of the Jordan River when traveling from Judea to Galilee, in order to avoid the Samaritan country altogether. We should also note that in John, the "Jews" as a corporate entity are consistently cast in an unfavorable light. The frequent objections of official Judaism to Christian claims appear to have been gathered by the author and he has attempted in this Gospel to answer them systematically, especially in chapters 7 and 8. In his doing so, it would seem that his interest goes beyond that which is purely historical. The strict Jewish rules which practically identified Samaritans with heathen (from the Jewish point of view) were probably already in existence by the time of Jesus. For example, Jeremias shows that strict segregation was still practiced and was the rule until the time of Rabbi Aquiba (d. 135).[51]

6.3.1 Verse 9-"For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

This might well be translated more literally, "for Jews do not use (vessels) in common with the Samaritans" or "Jews and Samaritans do not mix." The New English Bible similarly translates. "Jews and Samaritans, it should be noted, do not use vessels in common." The Samaritans were religiously and ritually impure. according to Jewish standards. Jews would not normally put their lips to a cup from which a Samaritan had drunk. Raymond Brown quotes a Jewish regulation of A.D. 65-66 which warned that one could never count on the spiritual purity of Samaritan women. because they were menstruants from the cradle, a la Leviticus 15:19. [52] John is teaching indirectly that Jesus has broken down the barriers which separate people from one another. That is why towards the end of the whole story we find two important climactic and summaric statements: 1) "Lift up your

eyes. and see how the fields are already white for harvest" (4:35). The mission of Jesus Christ. and therefore also the mission of the disciples. and the ensuing Christian Church includes the Samaritans. too. The Samaritans are symbolic of all non-Jews. or Gentiles generally. 2) " ... We have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world" (4:42). This puts in different words what was just stated above. that Jesus' mission in the world is universal, for all people.

6.3.2 Verse 10-"Living Water"

Water provides almost endless symbolism for the Oriental mind. to whom it appears as the most indispensable factor in life. Water is purifying. stills thirst. gives and renews life, growth, and fruitfulness all of which could be easily applied to the higher needs and blessings of man in the spiritual sense. In the Old Testament, God himself is the "fountain of living waters" in Jeremiah 2:13 and 17:13. His worshipers can drink from "the river of his delights" (Psalm 36:8). This image is also transferred in the Old Testament to wisdom, applied to the Torah (Law), and to the Holy Spirit by the rabbis. Philo applies it to the Logos (Word). Thus the figurative expression on the lips of Jesus can have become for the evangelist John a symbol of all that Jesus meant to him. C. K. Barrett points out interestingly that there is a double contrast and parallelism in the term "living water." There is the contrast between the living, flowing water of the spring of Jacob contrasted with the living water given by Jesus conferring eternal life. And then there is also the contrast between Jacob and Jesus as the givers of that water.[53] "Living Water" is only one of many images by which Jesus designates himself or his gifts in John, along with other significant terms such as "bread," "vine," "door," "way," and other similar ideas. In 1977 California suffered a severe drought, but with 1978 the rains came and the Bureau of Water Conservation became the Bureau of Flood Control. Water means different things to different people in different circumstances. We need water to drink, to irrigate farms, for baths and fountains, for manufacturing, for cooking, as well as for cooling. Does the word "water" mean the same thing to one sailing a boat across a sunny harbor as it does to someone who has just escaped the ravages of a spring flood? "Living water this same Greek expression is a perfect example of the Johannine use of misunderstanding. Jesus is speaking of the water of life, the water which gives eternal life; the woman is thinking of the convenience of flowing water, piped water, so much more desirable than the stale water of the cisterns. For Jesus, just as water is essential to natural life, so living water is essential to eternal life! As Raymond Brown says, "the living water is not Jesus himself, but something spiritual that he offers to the believer who can recognize God's gift. The living water is not eternal life but leads to it. "[54]

6.3.3 Verses 23, 24-"in spirit and truth"

In both verses 23 and 24, we should first of all notice that in the Greek text, the two nouns are governed by one preposition, so that in reality we have one compound idea (as we previously also noticed in 3:5, "water and spirit"). What does Jesus mean here with this double term? William Temple once wrote,

It is impossible to exhaust the wealth of this great declaration ... God is spirit. That is the most fundamental proposition in theology. God is not the totality of things–the all; nor is He an immanent principle to which all things conform; He is Spirit–active energy, alive and purposive, but free from the temporal and spatial limitations which are characteristic of matter. [55]

The new Christian worship which Jesus brings is the worship of God as Father in a communion of faith with Jesus, the Truth, through the internal action of the Holy Spirit. The believer comes to know the Father by accepting the word of Jesus, for as Jesus said, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also" (14:7). And "No one comes to the Father but by me." So the activity of the Holy Spirit brings believers into a communion of faith with Jesus so that the risen Jesus is the new "place" of worship, the new temple (cf. 2:19-21; 14:26; 16:13). Thus this life of faith in Jesus is the work of God entirely through his spirit, for God is spirit, that is, he acts, communicates himself through his spirit. "Spirit" here can only mean the spirit of God, as it does generally in the Johannine writings. It draws attention, as Barrett says, to the supernatural life that Christians enjoy. Christians are called by the Gospel that they may offer to God a pure worship in spirit and in truth. This pure worship consists in the unity of people in Christ, and thus both with one another and with God, and in obedience to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus himself prays for this unity in his prayer (17:22ff.). Therefore we can say that to have faith in Christ is to offer to God the perfect sacrifice of perfect obedience. Jesus is himself the center and the means of the worship of God. He is man's access to God (14:6) and by him men offer worship to God. Thus, "in spirit" means a worship of heart and will, not tied to strict performance according to a code or form, but expressing a self dedication more pervasive than the requirements of any law or literalistic legalism. The new Christian worship which Jesus ushers in is the worship of God as Father in a communion of faith with Jesus who claims to be the truth (14:6), through the work of the Holy Spirit. "Jesus is speaking of the eschatological replacement of temporal institutions like the temple, resuming the theme of 2:13-22. The spirit is the means by which God gives them life from above (3:5). This spirit raises men above the earthly level, the level of flesh, and enables them to worship God properly, "says Raymond Brown. [56] "In truth" means, in Johannine theology, the divine reality revealed by Jesus, in which believers are called to share. It refers to the single basis of this supernatural life in Christ through whom God's will is faithfully fulfilled. Truth as reality, rather than an opposite of falsehood. is characteristically Hellenistic. Thus here it would mean in sincerety. without hypocrisy or self-deception. or anything connected with an "unreal" image of worship. or idolatry. In

I John 5:20-21. we again see this Johannine usage clearly: "and we are in him who is true. in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God. and eternal life. Little children. keep yourselves from idols." Reality, genuineness. and truth–these are the concerns that grip the hearts of young men and women who are struggling for identity today. To the one with whom there is a sense of hopelessness. aimlessness. and despair, Jesus speaks. "I am come that men/women may have life and may have it in all its fulness" (10:10b. NEB). Life's meaning and fulfillment is tied to God and to our relationship to Him. not to things. The cross did not negate Jesus' message, and the death of Christ unites us to God in love! The facade and artificiality of much of modern life have led to a widespread desire for something real. genuine. and honest. This quest for reality versus sham. for that which is reliable and valid versus so much that is empty and meaningless/is the object of Jesus' discussion with this Samaritan woman. If Jesus is the "truth." as he claims (14:6). and whose "life was the light of men" (1:4), if he is "the true vine" (15:1). then the relationship to Jesus is the key to the very understanding of life itself. "Spirit and truth" are united in idea by the one preposition. After the preceding dialogue with Nicodemus. it is easy to understand that the true meaning of "in spirit and truth" are those who are "born of the spirit" (cf. 3:3-8). Of himself, earthly man can have no access to God and his heavenly realm (cf. 3:31). If man is to pray effectively or worship meaningfully, he must be enabled by God through his spirit to do so. In true worship there is an encounter with God for which God must make man capable by his grace. Man must himself become a different being to truly worship God. In the new creation, there is also reality in worship. The Samaritan woman's mistake is a common one also today. Religion is much more than form, ceremony, or identification with a particular geographical location. It is not a question of where, but rather of how to worship. Gerazim or Jerusalem is not the question. Worship is more than a place; it is a person. The how and the what are the all-important elements, not the where. The result of this conversation is that the townspeople show a growth of faith, as reflected in the titles predicated of Jesus. They go beyond the woman's description of Jesus as the "prophet" (4:19), and perhaps the "Messiah" (4:25, 29) to acknowledge him as "the Savior of the world" (4:39-42). The people believe the word of Jesus (the Jerusalem Bible translates v. 41, "when he spoke to them") and come to see him as the Savior of the world. This carefully-told story is the dynamic of coming to faith in response to Jesus' word and the mission of Jesus' disciples to continue the process. The term "savior" was a common title for Jesus after the Resurrection, especially in St. Paul and in the Lucan writings, but this is the only case of it in the four gospels being applied to Jesus during his public ministry. John also uses it in his first Epistle once (4:14). Since the title was also used in Hellenism, John probably felt that it was well adapted for the public preaching of the Gospel. Therefore, in contrast to its usage in his syncretistic environment, he uses the expression here in a special and exclusive way.

6.4 Conclusion

What the woman learned unexpectedly at the well of Jacob in her conversation with Jesus, the source of the "living water," we all need to learn again and again. The woman came seeking water and found the answer to life, that which was of lasting value for her. She learned that material things are not preeminent. The real values of life are quite removed from the sphere of the material world. Even water from Jacob's well is insignificant when compared to the spiritual menu given in grace by our Lord. She also discovered that the eternal Savior, who came to redeem and save all men, was ready to do his work of saving. She was unable to do it, but the soul that sought salvation was meeting one who stood ready to pour out the living water without reservation. Further, this involved the concomitant discovery that she was morally unclean and sinful, and that a miracle must be worked in her before healing could be possible. No effort on her part could bring about the victory in her soul. She learned, finally, that she was empowered by God to do effective witnessing. Perhaps no one could be more surprised than she was to find that men and women of Sychar, her home town, would be willing to listen to her words concerning the way to meaningful life. It must have been a thrilling experience to see a whole village turn to Jesus for salvation as a result of her testimony. Because she knew him as Savior, she had power to influence them, as she witnessed of her own growing faith in the Messiah. Can we do less?

6.5 Excursus on Living Water

The Rabbis said, "As water gives life to the world, so do the words of the Torah give life to the world." And this function of life-giving law Jesus had already taken to Himself on the Sermon on the Mount with his refrain, "I say unto you." The MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE (Dead Sea Scrolls) says, "The origin of truth lies in the fountain of light. Like waters of purification God will sprinkle upon man the spirit of truth to cleanse him of all the abominations of falsehood and of all pollution through the Spirit of uncleanness, to the end that being made upright men may gave transcendental knowledge and the love of the sons of heaven (p. 55) (Gaster, T. H., "Scriptures of the Dead Sea Seat," 1957). The equating of water from heaven with knowledge is quite characteristic of Jewish Gnosticism and reappears when Origen comes to interpret this text of John. How far Origen was original in his importation of material from Philo to help to explain this text is not clear, but he probably had some (Jewish-Christian) forerunners. His is the first who vouches for the reading of the text which is current in most versions of today. This requires a stop after the words, "let him come unto me and drink." (7: 37, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. 'He who believes in me,' as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. "') Then what follows refers to the individual Christian and not to Christ Himself. As the Scripture says, 'He that believes in me,' as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water." Origen, seeing in the Jewish idea

of water above the firmament a clue to the passage, says boldly: Let each of you strive to become a distributor of water that is above (and below), so that streams of living water, that is the understanding that is heavenly water and the sharing of that which comes from above, may be caused to flow from the belly of each and rise up into life eternal. (hom. in Gen. 1:2, GCS 2 9:3)

In hom. in Exod. 11:2 (GCS 29:254), he (Origen) even takes Jn 19:34 in this way:

This rock, if it had not been struck, would not give forth its waters; but being pierced has given us the waters of the NT... For if He had not been pierced, so that there came out of His side blood and water, we should all have suffered from a thirst for the word of God.

Ambrose (who followed Origen and Basil mostly in his exegesis) carries the idea a little further when he says that the fountain is the Holy Spirit: "This stream flowing from the throne of God (Apoc. 22:1) is the Holy Spirit who is imbibed by those who believe in Christ, according to the words: 'If any man thirst, let him come."' (de Spiro sco 3:20; PL 16:812). Irenaeus (adv. haer. 5:18:2 H) has no doubt: The Spirit is in all of us, and He is the living water that the Lord gives to those who have a right to believe in Him."

There is also the famous passage of Irenaeus (ibid. 3:24:1 H), Where there is the Church, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God, there the Church and all grace. Now the Spirit is truth. Wherefore those who do not partake of Him are not nourished by the breasts of their mother, nor do they drink of the clear stream that comes from the side of Christ.

Justin had this reading before Irenaeus, and seems to have taken the more realistic understanding of the text before the Gnosis of Origen had transformed it. He says (dial. 114:1):

We rejoice to die for the sake of the name of the Rock that is so fair and that wells up with living water for the hearts of those who, through Him, love the Father of all, and that provides drink for those who wish to drink the water of life. Cyrpian relates this to Isaiah 43:18-21: 'If they thirst in the desert,' says Isaias, 'He will bring them water; from the rock-will He bring it for them; the rock shall be cloven, and water shall flow and my people shall drink.' And this is fulfilled in the Gospel when Christ, who is the rock, is pierced by the blow of the lance in His passion. He warns us what had been foretold by the prophet when he proclaims: 'If any man thirst let him come, and let him drink who believeth in Me.' As the Scripture saith: 'Streams of living water shall flow from His belly. ' (ep. 63:8; CSEL 3:706)

Notes

[50]1: Josephus gives us a scant description of Masada in "Jewish Wars & Antiquities."
[51]Jeremias, Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus, II, B, pp. 224-231.
[52]Op. cit., I, p. 170.
[53] C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 228.

[54]Raymond Brown, op. cit., I, pp. 178-79.
[55]Readings in St.. John's Gospel, p. 63.
[56]Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to John, I, p. 180.

Chapter 7

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this one or his parents, so that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents. In order that the works of God might be manifested in him, it is necessary for you to work the works of the one sending me while it is day. The night comes when no one is able to work,' (John 2:2-3). [57]

How does the Christian react to suffering in this world? We know that the world is teeming with suffering. There is the suffering resulting from accidents, leaving people maimed for life; the suffering of lingering cancerous patients in our hospitals; the tragedy of the birth of abnormal children; the trial of couples who want but can have no children; the suffering caused by a suspicious and unloving spouse; the suffering of hundreds of victims of rapists, thugs, and revolutionists; and innumerable other cases of suffering that come to mind through our own experiences with people. Add to these examples of personal suffering, the catastrophes of nature in the earthquakes of Italy, Turkey, and Guatemala, for example, with the consequent homelessness, starvation, epidemic, suffering and tragedy; the hopelessness resulting from hurricanes and floods; and the afflictions of starving millions of innocent victims in the drought areas of Asia and Africa. As we are reminded of individual and world suffering, we get the definite impression that this is a very tragic world in which we live. How can a Christian live with optimism, joy, and hope in such a situation? Where does sin come from? Why do people suffer? Does God punish us with sickness and suffering because of our sins? How come Christians have as many tribulations as unbelievers and the rejectors of God? Does God today visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations? These and many similar questions bother Christians of our own time, as they did the people of the Old Testament period. At the very moment when Jesus was showing genuine concern for this blind beggar, the disciples came forward with a theological problem, and set out to find the solution. Isn't it strange that so many of us are busy in speculation about questions that are basically beyond us, when there is a real problem closer at hand? It is easy to intellectualize our problems! While the blind man definitely needed help, the disciples came to Jesus with the

theological question, Who sinned, this one or his parents, that he should be born blind? They were perplexed and curious, just as many people today are bothered with the questions of human suffering in a world in which they are taught that God is in control. The disciples were, of course, speaking out of their Jewish background, for the Jews generally believed that all suffering must be retributive, a divine punishment for sin. This is also a common understanding even today, as most pastors will be able to attest from their own experience with parishioners in times of suffering. The disciples did not realize the confusion of thought that their question involved. They were beyond their depth theologically, and their question did not make sense in the case of the man born blind. Since the man was born blind, he could hardly be punished for his own sins, or he would have to have sinned in his mother's womb. On the other hand, there was a popular idea that the sins of the parents had their consequence in the misfortunes of their children. Jesus brushes aside such speculations. He is not trapped by the theological question. He shows that what matters about this man is not that he illustrates a theory of divine justice (or injustice), nor that he disagrees with it. He might have made an exegesis of the Beak of Job, or given an interpretation of Ezekiel's wonderful explanation of suffering (18:20-23). But, as the text shows, he was not concerned with the causes nor with the origin of evil in any of its forms. The supremely important question for Jesus is not "Who sinned...?" but rather "How can this tragedy be turned to the glory of God? The opportunity of glorifying God is the ultimate moral factor in every situation for our Lord. Consequently, Jesus assured his followers that this man's affliction gave him an opportunity to show what God can do. The vitally important question is not, "Who is responsible?" this man or his parents but rather, "How can this fact be turned to the glory of God?" Not, to take another example, is alcoholism hereditary, but rather, do you want life abundantly in Him, and the consequent victory which that fact brings? In the problems of life, people are prone to ask, "What have I done to deserve this?" That question is most often asked in regard to life's darker experiences. Sorrow or pain, the catastrophe that strikes out of a clear sky, the little nagging irritations and frustrations of every day that can assume such gigantic proportions what have we done to deserve them? Why doesn't it occur to us to ask the same question in regard to the daily blessings and mercies of life, which are equally mysterious? We have done nothing to deserve our blessings, any more than the vicissitudes of life.

O how I fear Thee, living God, With deepest, tenderest fears, And worship Thee with trembling hope And penitential tears. (Frederich W. Faber, SBH #181, v. 4)

For Jesus in our text, it was far more important to concentrate on letting the tragic situation before them manifest the glory of God than to answer the theological question about God's action. While in similar stories, the synoptists emphasize the desire of Jesus to help the unfortunate and needy., John's Gospel insists on showing that the "signs" were done to demonstrate the glory of the Father. [58] The blind beggar was available to let the glory of God shine through him to make that glory known to all, so that faith in Him could ensue. We, too, demonstrate his glory by the way we react to pain and suffering, and also by the way we react to the needs and sufferings of others. While it seems that

human suffering is recognized in the Bible as a part of the result of the sinfulness of man in this fallen world, it may also be the result of natural law and of human choice, or most often a combination of the two.

7.1 The Old Testament Idea of Suffering

The primitive and crude conception of divine justice in the Old Testament regards every calamity as a punishment for some sin. The old theory of a direct casual relationship between sin and sickness was very much alive in Jesus' day, as our text shows, despite the challenge to this viewpoint, and a further interpretation of suffering in the Book of Job. In Ezekiel 18:20-23 we read one of the interpretations of this problem:

The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

The Jews had much discussion about various situations thus involved. The problem of a baby born with an affliction offered greater difficulty than, for example, a sick adult, who could place the blame in his own behavior. Some of the rabbis held that not only could the sin of the parents leave its mark on an infant, but they even concluded that an infant could sin in the mother's womb. Possibly the most helpful discussion of the view of suffering in the Old Testament is in the Book of Job. Instead of seeing suffering as sent by God, or a punishment for sin, in Job it was a test of faith. As the disasters carne upon Job, his friends concluded that he must be very sinful to suffer so much. But Job very strongly denied this idea of suffering as retribution, and insisted that he had committed no sin worthy of such punishment. In this situation, although suffering grievously, and denying that his suffering was a punishment for sin all this against the background of a theology which did link suffering and sin very closely, as we have seen Job was very open to the temptation to give up his faith in God, since God seemed to be so unfair in allowing his suffering. But Job resisted the temptation, and we find that God had confidence in Job's faith, and allows Satan to tempt Job. But Job emerged with his faith not only intact, but even stronger because of his experience. So while suffering is here seen as a look of Satan which God allows, we also see suffering as a strengthening, a disciplinary act, which develops not only in Job, but in other places in the Old Testament as well (cf. Psalm 118:17-18; Proverbs 3:11-12) It developed even more clearly in the New Testament (cf. Hebrews 12:5-7 and Romans 5:3-4). In the New Testament the causal relationship between sin and punishment is just as emphatically denied by Jesus when he spoke, for example, of Pilate's massacre

of the Galileans and of the tragedy of Siloam. In Luke 13:1-2, 4, we read his words;

There were some present at the very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered thus? I tell you, No' 'Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, No! '"

Of all the attitudes to suffering that the Bible reflects, the teaching of Jesus must obviously be the most important for Christians. He surely did not regard it as a punishment for individual sin, nor as being "sent" by God in punishment for sin. Rather, it seems here that he regarded it as something evil, the enemy of God and contrary to the fulness of life, and consequently he sought to remove it wherever he could. In the Synoptic Gospels it seems that Jesus is presented in such a way that there is a connection between sin and suffering, and therefore Jesus's healing miracles were a part of his attack on the sinful realm of Satan there. While this idea may be in the background of Jesus, here Jesus understands suffering as an occasion to reveal God's glory. For the Christian, it means that there is a way of meeting suffering which can lead to its being over-ruled to a beneficial purpose. We surely can never say that suffering itself is a producer of good, for it is always evil and contrary to God's real desire for his people. But out of the evil of suffering, when met in the right way, good may everge. To put it in different words, suffering has a possible disciplinary effect, but not a necessary one. A person may emerge from an experience of suffering stronger for his experience, but there is no guarantee that he will. As far as the discipline of a person's character is concerned, suffering is neutral, for it may lead either to personal strengthening or denial. It is the attitude which that involved person adopts to his suffering that is the determinative factor. The real answer to the problem of suffering is to be found in the victory offered by the Christian Gospel, the life, suffering, death, and glorious victory of Christ in the Resurrection. Paul saw this in his discussion in Romans 5:3-5,

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Jesus did not give us much in the way of a theology of suffering. Not even our Lord himself gives us a ready-made answer to the problem but, since he himself overcame his final rejection and suffering, he offers us something even more important, that is, help in overcoming it! How are we to face suffering when it comes? Shall we conquer it, or will it conquer us? That is what the New Testament is concerned about. All the "signs" in John, as also this example, are seen as means by which God may reveal his creative power, so that healing will lead ro faith in Jesus as one who is sent by God himself (cf. v. 7). Jesus is shown to be "the light of the world" (9:5). Believers derive their spiritual life from Jesus of Nazareth, in the same way that the moon and the stars

receive their illumination from the sun. So in this chapter Jesus is revealed as the "light" because he brings the life and light of God to men, who are in darkness (blindness). Since he reveals the Father who is light, he can call himself also the light as well. As we read in I John 1:5b, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Throughout this chapter we read about Jesus' opening the eyes of a man born blind, but to this occasion, as is his narrative style, he attaches a discourse, which turns the miracle-event into a "sign," pointing beyond itself to the greater truth that Jesus is truly the light of the world. He is the One who can also open the eyes of persons who are spiritually blind because of sin and unbelief. In the ensuing discussion unbelief and spiritual blindness are regarded as part of the same problem (cf. 9: 39-41). This vivid story of Jesus' encounter with this blind man is said by Raymond E. Brown to reflect "Johannine dramatic skill at its best."[59] The uniqueness of Jesus as the "light of 'the world" comes out very clearly as the story progresses. What a contrast this story in John 9 reveals. At the beginning of the chapter we see a man born blind; when the chapter ends, he not only has his sight, but is also a witnessing believer, who points others to the Lord. The healed blind man is a model of the Christian believer who suffers like his Lord for his faith, for the opposition of unbelief is loaded upon him. The Pharisees, the spiritual leaders of Israel at the time, questioned the healed man very intensively, seeking to disprove the healing, and to deny Jesus' Messiahship. By the end of the chapter they are the ones who are called "blind." In verse 39, Jesus says, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." Since they claim spiritual sight, they are condemned in their blindness of denying the Son of God (vv. 40-41). It appears that John has deliberately demonstrated the progressive development in the blind man's understanding and faith in Jesus. The blind man moves from one stage of understanding to another. He came to believe because he had gained his sight. The argument of personal experience is hard to contradict! The closer our own walk is with the Lord, the more like the blind man we, too, will grow in faith and Christian maturity and understanding. His knowledge deepens with each step. First he calls Jesus, "the man who is called Jesus" (v. 11). When the Pharisees persisted in examining him, he said simply, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see" (v. 15). Then, in spite of their contempt, he says to the Pharisees, "He is a prophet!" (v. 17). After trying to involve the parents in the responsibility of their son, the parents tell the Pharisees that their son is of age, so they should consult him directly (v. 23). They interrogate the healed man a second time, stating that Jesus is a sinner, but the blind man who is healed witnesses by saying, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see" (v. 25). Later, when they revile Jesus in front of him, he states confidently, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (v. 33), reminding us of Nicodemus' statement in 3:2, connecting the works of Jesus with his divine origin. This statement angered the Pharisees and "they cast him out" (v. 34). When Jesus heard this he sought the healed man and revealed himself to him as the "Son of man"; the healed man then said, "'Lord, I believe'... and he worshiped him" (v. 38). Notice the growth in the healed mans confession:

11 - "the man who is called Jesus" 12 - "I do not know." 17 - "He is a prophet" 33 - "This man is from God" 38 - "'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him."

There is definitely a developing belief in the cured man, for through the grace of God this man confesses Jesus Christ. That is how God's works are revealed in his people. It is always God's work when anyone can say, "I can see!" and again it is God's splendid work when the man says, "I believe." The healed blind man is a model of the Christian believer who suffers criticism from his enemies, as did his Lord, because of his confession. On the other hand, notice how the continued confession of the healed man antagonizes the Pharisees and the increasing bitterness of his opponents:

16 - "There was a division among them." 24 "This man is a sinner" 28 - "They reviled him" 34 - "They cast him out 41 - "But now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains" We see the drama of this chapter enacted in terms of the theme, "Spiritual sight leads to confession of faith in Jesus." By A.D. 90, confession of faith in Jesus Christ meant perpetual exclusion from the Synagogue. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that the disciples freely attended the synagogues. The writer of John here reflects a later period, after A.D. 85, when it is generally recognized that Christians were banned from the synagogues. [60] It seems unlikely that such a situation would have developed in Jesus' day. It would here appear that John is expressing the actual concerns of the church at a later time, as he writes the Gospel. So we see that the question of the Messiah is at the center of the debate between Judaism and Christianity (v. 22), for we read that "the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue." As a recent commentary points out, "Official Pharisaic Judaism not only argues vigorously against Jesus' Messiahship and divine origin, but also fights the followers of Jesus Christ with external measures."[61] Here we also see how social unpopularity and ostracism is so often a consequence of believing and confession of Christ. This has been true in many periods of Church history, and is exhibited even today in some atheistic countries.

7.2 "Lord I believe" (v. 38)

The blind man came to believe because he had gained his sight. When the two stood together the Master began his invitation by asking, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" (9:35). We ought to remember that this is the first time his eyes had feasted upon Jesus. He certainly recognized .the tender voice that had commanded him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." So his question revealed something of his eager interest and a quickening of the faith that had been growing within him. "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" (9:36). He expectantly awaited the answer, and leaned forward to catch the first note of assurance and direction. He was ready, waiting, listening, and pleading. And all the while he has a more solid ground for the faith that would enable him to make his confession of faith in Jesus. Jesus made the great revelation, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you" (9:37). What a discovery! Think of what that meant for a Jew:

it was a declaration that Jesus of Nazareth, who healed his eyes and gave him physical sight, was the Son of God, and even now stood before him. He was in the very presence of God's own Son. The echoes of the question were still reverberating in his ears, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" So now he could move out in the great step of faith. With a burst of sincerity and enthusiasm he said, "Lord, I believe" (9:38), and "he worshiped him." The worship, the adoration, the full commitment followed. Our Lord had tested him, received his confession, opened the door into his kingdom, assured him of his divine origin, and welcomed him into God's family. What a wonderful experience! He was truly a child of God! "Do you believe?" The you is emphatic. It is reminiscent of the scrutiny which precedes the confession of faith at the time of the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism, as recorded in Acts 8:37, "And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. '11[62]

7.3 "Are we also blind?" (v. 40)

What a pathetic question this is coming from the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Judaism. They knew the answer. They had cast out the one who received both his physical and spiritual sight from Jesus. He was now a disciple of Christ, living with joy and blessedness and eternal life. They had rejected the Light and the "giver of light." They had sealed their doom by rejecting the "Light of the World" (v. 41). Jesus' answer is a play on two levels of the metaphor of blindness, the incapacity to understand, and the deliberate refusal to comprehend. If the Pharisees were really incapable of understanding, their "blindness" would not be morally condemning; but in dialogue they have claimed to be well-informed spiritual guides, and so, from John's point of view, they have no excuse (v. 41). But on the other hand, what a joy it is to learn that although we are blind we can receive sight. It is not the will of the Son of man that any should stumble along in the darkness. He wants to bring sight that "the works of God might be manifest in us (9:3). A person may choose to remain blind, as the Pharisees did choose. But on the other hand, he may choose under the power of the Holy Spirit of God to come to the Light of the World, and receive the spiritual sight of faith. Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee; Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me; Once I was blind, but now I can see; The light of the world is Jesus.

This chapter exposes the fundamental failure of human behavior in its on strength. It shows the person who is locked within himself and wants only his own advantage, who is thus closed to God's claim when it challenges him. As he hardens his attitude the more brutally he is confronted with God's demand if he does not free himself from the prison of his egotism. Only God's word of healing and Light can do that.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this dark world's light; Look unto Me, your morn shall rise, And all your day be bright.' I looked to Jesus, and I found In Him my star, my sun; And in that light of life I'll walk Till trav'ling days are done. -Horatius Bonar, LBW, #497. 3.

Notes

[57]Since there was no punctuation in the original Greek manuscripts, it could well be that we should read verse 3 of this pericope as follows, thus removing some of the difficult implications of our usual translations: "This man did not sin, neither his parents. In order that the works of God might be displayed, we must carry on the work of God."

[58]In John's Gospel there are only two instances in which Jesus did help an ailing person (The paralytic in 5:1-9, and here in chapter 9). In both cases there is an unexpected act of compassion of Jesus' part. This would, of course, argue for the early origin of John's tradition, because by the time of the synoptic tradition, this idea had grown so that the synoptic picture, as we said in the text, reveals Jesus as a well-known healer to whom the crowds flocked. But in John's narrative discourse material Jesus is not shown primarily as a "healer," even though this was one of the predicted Messianic signs.

[59]Raymond E. Brown, Ope cit., I, (Vol. 29), p. 376.

[60]Expulsion from the synagogue suggests that the writing was completed after A.D. 85, when it is generally concluded that Christians were no longer admitted in to the synagogues. The Gospel in its first draft may have been earlier than this, and this addition could have been added later by a redactor.

[61]Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, Vol. II, p. 238.

[62]Verse 37 is put in the footnote in the RSV, and all study indicates that it is likely a liturgical interpolation into the story of the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip there recorded. Metzger, the textual critic, says, "V. 37 is a Western addition ... there is no reaso n why scribes should have omitted the material, if it had originally stood in the text. (A Textual Commentary the Greek New Testament, 1971, p. 359).

Chapter 8

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10: 1-42)

In this unique chapter, the Evangelist shows Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and the consequences which this revelation involve. Let us first look at a summary of the chapter, and then let us discuss some of the key concepts. Jesus used this occasion to distinguish between the true and the false shepherds, or, to put it in other words, between himself and the religious leaders of Judaism. The discussion recalls in a remote way the "lost sheep" of Luke l5:3ff (cf. also Matt. l8:l2ff). Here, however, it is treated quite differently from those synoptic parallels, which use the "parable" form, which are very broad comparisons. The reference here on the other hand, is an allegory, a wayside saying, a proverb. The word for "parable" (parabole) does not appear in John, while it is regularly used by the synoptics for this idea. A parable usually teaches one point, with little emphasis being placed on the details of the story. So while an allegory is a kind of parable in that it also stresses one theme, it approaches it from many angles through the details, as well, and each detail of the word- picture is intended to have some significance. [63] So in this allegory of the Good Shepherd, Jesus draws many pictures of the Pharisees and other false shepherds in contrast to himself. The sheepfold is the open courtyard in front of the farmhouse, into which the sheep are led at night. It has one opening and a shepherd enters through the door, and keeps watch over the sheep (v. 3). The eastern sheepfold frequently had no gate or door which would be fastened shut, but only a narrow entrance on one side. The shepherd could then lie across this opening so that he would be aroused if any intruder tried to enter. The shepherd thus literally constituted the "door" (v. 9). The statement that all of Jesus' predecessors were "thieves and robbers" seems indeed strange and almost intolerant, even for this Gospel. The reference is most likely not to the Hebrew leaders and prophets of the previous Old Testament times, which for Christians were the forerunners of Jesus. But the terms more likely refer to the current religious leaders such as the Pharisees and the priests, who had become the challengers and enemies of Jesus and His teaching. While the

recognized shepherd would enter through the door, the thief and the robber would scale the wall. A shepherd names his sheep, and they know his voice. Hence in the morning when the shepherd called their names, they would follow him, recognizing his voice. Indian churchman Daniel T. Niles tells of a striking illustration of this while traveling in Northern India. He noticed a young shepherd boy keeping a huge flock of sheep. He stopped and asked, "How many sheep do you have?" "I don't know," replied the boy, "I can't count." Then Dr. Niles asked him, "How do you know if some of the sheep haven't wandered off when you get to the place where you're going to camp at night?" To his astonishment the boy answered, "I don't know how many wander off, but I know which ones. I can't count, but each sheep has a name! And I know their names!" Let us notice how Jesus applied the allegory. He identified himself as "the door" of the sheep. Not "a door" among many doors, but the only door into the spiritual fold of God. This reference, of course recalls Old Testament passages such as Isiah 40:11, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young," and Psalm 23:2, "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters." In the prophet Ezekiel's day, the unworthy rulers of the Jews of his time were denounced as bad, unworthy shepherds (Ezekiel 34). More likely here the reference is to false messiahs, of whom there were many politico-religious upstarts in the time of Jesus, and all false religious leaders. The "hireling" who does not have the true interests of the sheep at heart may similarly mean unworthy leaders such as the Sadducees, whose interests were largely selfish and material. Thieves come for but one purpose: to satisfy their own fleshly desires. To do this they will steal, and if necessary, kill and destroy. But the "good:; shepherd, or "beautiful" shepherd (for kalos means both is different). He will even sacrifice his life for the good of his sheep. There might be some people who are confused by the fact that here Jesus is shown to be both the "door" of the sheep as well as "shepherd." But the allegory does have significance at this point, too. For people outside the fold, he is the "door" of entrance. But to those within, he is the "Good Shepherd." He is as a door shut and bolted, to keep out the thieves and robbers, but as an open door, welcoming passage and communication. We have our admission into the flock of God through Christ, the door. The function of the shepherd is to lead his sheep in safe places where the grass is fresh and green, and other places where they can drink sweet water. As the day wears on and as the sun gets hotter, he leads the sheep to where they will be sheltered from the scorching sun. But he does the choosing for them, and it is he who brings them safely into the sheepfold at night. One additional idea is introduced about the shepherd here. He has come to give life in abundance. And he will do so by giving his life "for (i.e. as a "substitute for") the sheep" (v. 11). He is not said to be killed, as he might well be if the sheep were attacked by robbers or wild animals. He "lays down his life" for the sheep and it is emphasized that he does this voluntarily (vv. 15, 17, 18). This is consistent with the presentation of Jesus throughout this Gospel. The climax of the allegory is the expectation of one flock (v. 16). "This fold" is apparently intended to refer to Judaism; the "other sheep" are the Gentiles, outside the Jewish fold, who will

be brought into the Christian flock. John is here justifying the existence of the Gentile church against opposition from Jewish disciples such as those who hampered Paul's work in Asia Minor. The contrast between one who "lays down his life," and the hirelings who are self-serving is dramatic. The Pharisees were only time-servers, whose sole interest in the sheep was what they could get out of their animals for themselves (cf. vv. 12-13). Not owning the sheep, when the wolves came they would look out for "No.1." So they ran away, leaving the sheep to the ravages of the wolves. But Jesus, the "good shepherd," lays down his life to save his own sheep.

8.1 10:19-21 - Confusion among the Pharisees

Previously Jesus' words had produced a schism among the people (7:12, 31, 43). Now the Pharisees themselves were divided. Many of them said that Jesus was demon-possessed and insane. Why listen to a mad-man? But others said, "these are not sayings of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (v. 21). C. S. Lewis makes the observation that Jesus mainly produced three effects upon his listeners: hatred, terror, and adoration. There was never a trace of people expressing mild approval. They were either for or against him. But none are so blind, as those who will not see! A period of approximately three months intervenes between John 10:21 and 10:22. During the interval Jesus had been engaged in a ministry outside of Jerusalem but confined to Judea (cf. Luke 10:1-13:21). At the end of this period he returned to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. John notes (v. 22) that it was winter. Actually it was about the middle of December in A.D. 29.

8.2 10:22-39 - Discussion at the Feast of Dedication.

This eight-day feast commemorated the cleansing and rededication of the temple by Judas Maccagaeus in 164 B.C. The Seleucid (Syrian) king, Antichus Epiphanes, sought to impose Greek customs and religion on the Jews. Especially in Judea he met intense opposition. As a result of their opposition he inflicted many atrocities upon the Jewish people. His crowning act in this "baiting" of the Jews was to desecrate their holy temple. He reconstructed it in honor of Aeus Olympius, erected a pagan altar upon the altar of burnt-offering, and sacrificed swine upon it. He also introduced heathen rituals and accompanying evil practices. This so incensed the Jews that they revolted against the Seleucids. Under Judas Maccabeus they prevailed. and once again cleansed and rededicated the temple to the worship of Jehovah. Even though the Feast of Dedication was not one of the greater feasts among the Jews, it was one of the most joyous. It was also called the Feast of Lights, since one of the features was to have the individual homes brightly lighted. The Jews could celebrate this feast in the synagogues of their own cities or villages. Since Jesus, however, was already in Judea, he journeyed to Jerusalem for its observance. The feast

is celebrated today by Jews as the Feast of Hannakuh. Sometime during the week of this feast Jesus was walking along Solomon's porch in the temple area. This was a covered collonade which ran along the eastern edge of the temple, and afforded some protection in any kind of weather (cf. Acts 3:11 and 5:12). This section is apparently intended as a general summary of the position of Jesus and his opponents to mark the end of his public teaching. Suddenly he was encircled by a group of hostile Jewish rulers. They were still angered by his stinging words spoken of them three months earlier. So they said, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. (10: 24). For the sake of argument they assumed he was the Christ, but the point of their demand was that he should so state "plainly." They wanted him to make the direct claim, "I am the Christ." But here he refuses to say that he is the Messiah, a designation more typical of the synoptic tradition. Instead he declares his unity with the Father (v. 30, "I and the Father are one." Note that literally he did not say, "The Father and I are one." He put the "I before the "Father." Not that he is greater than the Father. But the "I" is in the emphatic position.) Elsewhere (14:28) he says that he is subordinate to the Father ("for the Father is greater than I"), reflecting the same kind of theological tension which is shown in the prologue, where the Logos is declared to be divine, yet separate from God. Jesus had avoided using the messianic title, "Christ,:: to the Jewish leaders, apparently because the Jewish leaders attached to it a highly nationalistic sense. At times he allowed others to call him "Christ" without protest. At Caesarea Philippi he had sought such a declaration from the Twelve, and rejoiced when they gave it. To the Samaritan woman he admitted to being such in the words, "I that speak unto you am he!" Finally, under oath he would confess to being the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 26:63f). When he did so, the Sannedrin voted him to be guilty of blasphemy. Before Pilate they charged him with being a king. So knowing the purpose of the Jewish rulers, He had refused to make this claim "plainly" before them. He will not do so until the right moment arrives in God's time-table, But his hour had not yet come. So instead of saying plainly, "I am the Christ," Jesus reminded them that he had told them who he was. His works had given testimony that he was God's son. But they had not believed his words; neither had they believed his works. This was because they were not his sheep, as he had told them some three months earlier (10;4). His sheep hear and heed his voice, he knows them, and they follow the shepherd. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (10:28), gives another reason why they should recognize who he is. "Never" is the translation of a strong, emphatic double negative. In English grammar, two negatives make a positive. But in Greek grammar, two negatives make instead a stronger negative. So Jesus here emphatically said that his sheep shall "not never" be destroyed. In addition, he says, "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (v. 29). This security rests not in the believer's ability to hold on to God in Christ, but is rather the ability of the Father and the Son to hold on to the believer. Many will try to snatch them away. But they must defeat God Himself in order to do so! Here is security par excellence. The vv. 34-36 are based on a quotation from

Psalm 82:6. Israelites had been called "gods." "Why then," says Jesus, "do you accuse me of blasphemy for saying that I am God's son?" (vv. 33-35). There is both a comparison and a contrast between Jesus and other men here. The discussion assumes that the Old Testament was the final word upon every subject–a position which was held by Jews and the early Christians alike, here expressed by the author's parenthesis, "the scripture cannot be broken." This means that any passage could be quoted (out of its context and intended original meaning, we would today say) to prove a point without regard to its original meaning. The argument here is an example of this treatment. In Psalm 82, God is depicted as exhorting judges of Israel to give true judgment, as they act as his representatives. They are addressed as "gods" and as "sons of the Most High." Men are spoken of in this way in other Old Testament passages also, for a "son of God" meant in general one who shared God's character or reproduced his activities on earth (cf. Matthew 5: 9; 5: 48) .

8.3 10:31-33 - The Reaction of the Jews: "Making Yourself God"!

This clearest of all of Jesus' claims to deity sent the Jews into a rage beyond their control. They "took up stones again to stone him" (v. 31). The "again" refers back to v. 8:59, but there is one significant difference between these verses. Two different words are used for "took up." In 8:59 the word suggests that they merely picked up stones that were handy. But the word used on 10:31 probably means that they "picked them up from a distance." They picked them up and carried them. Likely there were no stones upon Solomon's porch. So the Greek words suggest that in the former instance the Jews acted through impulsive anger, but that in the latter case they were so enraged that they went out and found stones, bent upon making a final end of this one whom they regarded as an arch-blasphemer. But Jesus stood his ground before this enraged and murderous group. He reminded them that they had seen him perform many good works "from my Father. "For which of these do you stone me?" (v. 32). (Literally. "Are you trying to stone me?") Evidently they had already drawn back their arms, ready to hurl their stones. They replied that they were not stoning him for any good work, but for "blasphemy" (v, 33). This is the only time that this word appears in John's Gospel. Their reason for stoning Jesus was that "you, being a man, make yourself God" (v. 33). In John 5:18 they sought to kill Jesus because he made himself "equal with God." But here they said that "he made himself God." While some today say that Jesus never claimed to be God, surely the Jews so understood his claims here, and the language justifies their understanding. There is no question here but that he claimed to be one with the father and therefore God. The question is whether he blasphemed in doing so. If he and the Father are not one, then he did, as the Jews claimed. But if they are one, he did not speak blasphemy but the truth. The testimony of the scriptures, plus the testimony of the personal experience of all who have believed in him avow that he spoke the truth!

8.4 10:42-44 - A Stay in Perea

It was quite certain that the Jewish rulers would never believe the claims of Jesus. In fact, with each of his succeeding visits to Jerusalem, this became more evident. The recent violent episode saw the lines of battle drawn more tightly than ever. But for Jesus' dominant personality and unanswerable logic, already they might have killed him in a scene of mob violence. But his hour had not yet come. So he left Jerusalem, to return to the city no more until he carne for the final showdown. Therefore, with his disciples he journeyed eastward to the place beyond the Jordan River where John the Baptist had preached and baptized (v. 40). There he remained for some time. John notes that great crowds carne to him. This was in Perea, and even though the Galilean multitudes had long since forsaken him, the people of Perea flocked about him. This seems to be John's summary of the Perean ministry that is recorded more fully in Luke 3:22-16;10. But in keeping with his purpose, John only touches upon this ministry in. preparation for that which he records in the next chapter, namely the raising of Lazarus. He does, however, add one interesting note, which is not found in Luke, but which explains the effectiveness of the Perean ministry. The people who came to Jesus there said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true" (v. 41). What a compliment they paid to the Baptist's preaching! He had long since been beheaded by Herod Antipas. His eloquent tongue had been silenced. But his work lives on after him. He performed no "sign" by which to authenticate his message, but he had so faithfully portrayed the Christ that when Jesus appeared among them, they recognized him. Thus Jesus himself was the Baptist's "sign" that he was a man sent from God. John the Baptist had "decreased" indeed. But Christ had "increased." And the friend of the Bridegroom wished it to be so. The Bridegroom continued to increase in Perea as "many believed in him there" (v. 42). What satisfaction and honor any preacher or Christian teacher would have to know that John 10:41, 42 would be his fitting epitaph! Who among them would want any less? This concludes the account of Jesus' public teaching and controversies with the Jews.

8.5 Some Key Ideas In The Chapter

In this section let us discuss "Life" as used by Jesus, "The Abundant Life," and "The Good Shepherd" Idea, all key concepts in this chapter.

8.5.1 Life in St. John

The synoptic concept of "Kingdom of God," is almost entirely lacking in St. John and is replaced by the idea of "life and "eternal life." Ths characteristic is seen very clearly in the following table[64]: Matt. Mark Luke Total Synoptic John I Jn Joh. Total Life 7 4 5 16 35 13 48(x3) Kingdom of God 57 20 46 123 5 5

Further, John uses "life" (zoe) and "eternal life (zoe aionios) interchangeably. For him, they are apparently equivalents. He shows no preference for either expression, for he uses "life" 18 times and "eternal life" 17 times in his Gospel, and places the two expressions in parallel constructions frequently. The addition of the adjective "eternal" adds no distinguishable difference in meaning. What then does John understand by "life?" For him, life is primarily a qualitative term. It speaks of a new quality of existence so radically different from what a person experiences without it that its opposite can be called "death" (5: 24) . This means "life as God intended it to he." Life is the unifying theme which ties the entire Gospel together. The book claims to have been written that persons may have life (20:30). The fullest definition of what John understands by eternal life is given in 17:2-3: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent. John seldom uses the double title for Christ, except here and in 1:17. (Note: it is found in the Johannine epistles several times, and in the title of the Apocalypse three times.) Franz Mussner argues quite convincingly that in Johannine theology life is the totality of salvation which God imparts through Jesus Christ to those who believe. Life for John means to become, a child of God through a birth of the Spirit, to pass from death to life, from darkness to light, and from bondage to freedom. With the reception of life comes the experience of the love of God, and the gifts of joy and peace. To the believer is given the Holy Spirit to strengthen, teach and guide him and to assure him victory over the persecutions of the world and the power of the devil. Certainly involved is the forgiveness of sins and fellowship with Christ and with the Father. Also for John, this life is a present reality and not only a future hope. [65] It does have also a future dimension with richer fulfilment which awaits the return of Christ. Jesus is shown as the one who uniquely has life in himself (5:26), and he is the one who gives it to humans, who receive it through believing in Him. It embodies in itself all that is meant in the New Testament by salvation. As we said before, "life" for John means "eternal life." It is the life of the age to come already realized in the present. It is by its very nature imperishable, since it links us with the unchanging God. The almost total disappearance of the idea of the kingdom of God in John's Gospel and the preference for the expression "life" or "eternal life" led Franz Mussner to suggest three reasons why this has taken place in this gospel: 1. With the perception of the actual reality of the possession of life by believers the idea of the kingdom of God (which carries such an immediate eschatological coloring) was not suited for use. 2. The concept of life permitted a Christocentric emphasis without hindrance, whereas the theocentric understanding of the kingdom within the Jewish tradition was less suitable for this. 3. The concept of life was better suited for the internalization of the gift of salvation that was the concept of the kingdom.[66] God's greatest act of friendship and love towards man through Jesus Christ, then, is described as sharing in his "life and that is what it means to be a child of God (1:12-13). We have seen several times already that "life" permeates the Gospel from beginning to end (cp. l.14 and 20;31) This is the "God-kind of life, which is shared by the Father through the Son, by whom it is communicated to those

who through faith enter into a life-giving relationship with Jesus (3:16). All three persons in the Godhead are described as being involved in this "eternal life." The "living" Father is the source of life (5;26, 6:57) but life is most frequently linked in this Gospel with the person of Jesus whose mission is to give life (cf. 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and have it abundantly"). Further, the Holy Spirit through whom humans come to faith and grow in faith, generates this life within them by helping them make the word integral to their lives (3:3-5 6:63). This communion of life with Jesus and the Father is described variously in terms of knowing, loving, and mutual indwelling (10:14; 14:19; 17:3). But this life is not a thing or quality that stands on its own, for it flows from a life-giving relationship with a person, that is, with Jesus the Lord, and through him with the Father. Thus, being in relationship with them is to "live" in the fullest way possible for a human being.

8.5.2 "Eternal Life"

The sharing in God's life is both a present and a future possession. Besides, this life is "eternal': not so much because it belongs to the next life, but rather because it is indestructible, since it is Gods own life which knows no death and which will continue beyond physical death (8:51; 11:25-26). In fact, eternal life in the gospel is an all-inclusive term for salvation because it takes in everything which the Savior sent by God brings from God to his highest creature, man. The purpose of the mission of Jesus is to give life to the world. This thought is fundamental in John. Thieves and robbers come to steal, kill and destroy. But Jesus, the shepherd or the door of the sheep, keeps them alive and wants to give then an increase of life. In John, God the Father has eternal life in Himself and He has given this to the Son (5:26). "That which came in him was life" (1:3-4). All of those of whom it can be said that they are in Him (or have "come to be" in Him) have supernatural life. Origin, the early church father put it this way very bluntly:

If we understand the life that comes to be in the Logos, if we know Him who said: 'I am the Life,' we shall assert that no one of those outside the faith of Christ is alive, but all who live not to God are corpses.

8.5.3 "The Abundant Life," "Life in all its Fulness"

The life which we possess through Jesus Christ is life as God intended it to be. In 10:10, Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (RSV). The New English Bible translates this verse meaningful as, "I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fulness." To have abundance, even superfluity.of life is the goal of Christ's coming (to perisson literally means "superabundance"). The superabundant fulness of this life proceeding from God, which in other places is illustrated through the metaphors of the bubbling spring (4:14; cf. 7:38) or of the bread that satisfies all hunger forever (6:35; 50, 58), is highlighted by the last phrase, "and have it abundantly, over-

flowingly, in all its fulness. So the life afforded by Jesus to him who believes is of the eschatological kind, the attainment of that sphere where the Godhead dwells, and hence fulness, and superabundance. Thus for John, life is inseparable from God and from Jesus Christ, whom he has sent into the world. However, for John, "life is not an independent possession or quality, unrelated to God or to Jesus Christ. "And this is eternal life, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (17:3). As we said before, and now repeat, "life" as John uses the word involves a God-man relationship of fellowship and communion. A similar construction in Matthew 5:47 (permisson poieite, "what more are you doing than others?") does not denote something that would amount to more than life, but rather life in its highest degree, or what we call eternal life. How does it signify somehow a post-mortal life with God and the vision of his glory (cf. 17:24) as opposed to the life that Jesus bestows on us here and now. Rather it refers to this God-given life here and now in its indestructible power that survives beyond bodily death, since it is united with the Lord (cf. 11:25f.).

8.5.4 10:11, 14 - The Good Shepherd

John here uses a prominent Old Testament idea, which is a very natural metaphor for a ruler in a pastoral society. It is frequently found in the literature of the peoples of the Near East. In the Old Testament there is a play on the idea of David, the shepherd of his father's sheep, becoming the shepherd of Israel (II Samuel 7:f.). But God himself is even referred to as a shepherd in the prophecy of the Exilic Age (cf. Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31;10, Ezekiel 34:11-16). So Jesus is not only the descendent of David, but also he acts as God's own representative. In the Ezekiel prophecy, which we referred to previously (ch. 34), the prophet begins with an indictment of the rulers of Israel as unfaithful shepherds (vv. 1-10), and even includes the idea of the new David who is to come (vv. 23f.). John did not invent this tradition, but used an old and familiar one. He does, however, use it in a new and creative way. The relation of the sheep and shepherd is one of mutual understanding, rather than that of the ruler and people as in the Old Testament. The door of the fold and the thieves and robbers, while well-known from experience, has no direct parallel in the Old Testament. So John develops a new idea in his illustration, and when he talks about the shepherd's sacrifice of his life on behalf of the sheep, he further adds an entirely new dimension. It could very well be derived from Christian reflection on the sheep in the preaching of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:6-8 (cf. I Peter 2:2f.), of course. Certainly John stands in the main stream of Christian theology of the early church in thus describing the atonement as a great work of Christ. The intimate knowledge of the shepherd and the sheep is a beautiful part of the allegory. The personal identification of every individual in the flock strikes reverberations of meaning to individuals in our impersonal society. "I know my own sheep, and my sheep know me" (10:14). In many business and political relationships we are known by a number only, and we resent losing our personalities. Computers only know numbers, not individual people. But the Shepherd

is individually known and recognized by the sheep, and vice versa. At the time of the 1970 census, a census taker asked a woman how many children she had. She began by saying, "Let's see, there are Sally, Jimmy, Bob... " The census taker interrupted and said, "No, no, don't give me the names; just give the number. "But," the woman countered, "they don't have numbers. They have names!" Statistics may be necessary in government, and even church membel ship rolls, but not in the heart of the loving God. I am not a number to God, nor are you; each of us has a personal name, and are known by the Good Shepherd.

Notes

[63]The Greek word here used is not parabole but paroime, which means a road song, melody, and thus, a proverb, and is likely a derivation of the Hebrew word, "mashal," a teaching. Schnackenburg calls paroime a "figurative discourse." We might think of it as a cryptic discourse, a veiled saying, since in 16;25, and 29 Jesus says to the disciples that up until then he had spoken to them in paroimiais, literally, in "figures," but that soon he would speak to them "openly" of the Father (i.e. after Easter) ... So what a hidden discourse of this nature would mean for an unbeliever remains hidden. But for believers, its meaning is revealed as in John through the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit (cf. 16:12 ff), or as in the Synoptics where an explanation is immediately given by Jesus.

[64]Based on C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 6; and Raymond Brown, op. cit., I, Appendix I, "Johannine Vocabulary, pp. 505-508.

[65]George D. Vanderlip, Christianity According to John, p. 32 quotes from Franz Mussner, "Zoe. Die Anschauung vom 'Leben' im vierten Evangelium under Berucksichtigung der Johannesbriefe," Vol. I, No.5 (1952), pp. v-xv.

[66]Cf. Mussner, op. cit., as quoted by Vanderlip, op. cit., p. 42-43.

Chapter 9

RESURRECTION AND LIFE (John 11:1-44)

Jesus' Perean ministry was interrupted by a visit to Bethany, a village located about two miles from Jerusalem on the south-eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives. Here lived the family of Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary. Luke records a previous visit of Jesus to their home. In Luke, however, the village where Jesus stayed with them was on the road between Galilee and Jericho, not Bethany. In all likelihood he had made and would make other such visits. This is one of the most striking miracle stories in Scripture, and one of the most difficult narratives in the Gospel of John, perhaps more controversial than any other in the Gospels. There are two somewhat similar stories in the synoptic Gospels of the restoration of people who were said to be dead: the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22ff.) and a widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11ff.), although in both these cases it is possible that the person had not actually died. But there is nowhere in Scripture a parallel for the restoration to life of a man who had been dead for four days. It is difficult, if not impossible, to account for the omission from the synoptics of such a remarkable miracle, performed near Jerusalem in these circumstances, if it were known in the oral tradition. In fact, John says explicitly that it was this event which led the Jewish leaders to determine to put Jesus to death (vv. 46ff.). In the evangelist's deeper vision, it is no accident that at the moment that the Son of God gives the supreme demonstration of his power over life, the unbelievers resolve to destroy him and take all the steps necessary to that end. In the synoptics, on the other hand, the reason for their decision to eliminate Jesus was Jesus' action in cleansing the temple, and thus challenging their authority (Mark 11:18). Thus in John this is the climax of all of Jesus' "signs." Its Christological significance is stated at the beginning in verse 4, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it." At the climax of the narrative the soteriological significance is clearly stated also in verse 40, "Did not I tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" Together with the healing of the man born

blind, the raising of Lazarus expresses the central Christological idea of the fourth Gospel that Jesus is the light and the life of the world (cf. 1:4). Wherever the author found this story, he has placed this greatest of the signs of Jesus as the bringer of life quite deliberately at this point in the Gospel. As the drama between belief and unbelief reaches its height, it is a final powerful stimulus for faith, which makes many more people come to believe in Jesus (v. 45), so that the Jewish leaders view the swelling flood of believers with extreme anxiety (11:48; 12:19). The uniqueness of Jesus as God's Son is clearly attested to here. The incident is a dramatic demonstration of the truth already declared in 5:21, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son .gives life to whom he will" (cf. also 5:25, 28). This verse is undoubtedly the best interpretation of the raising of Lazarus in this chapter. This long drawn-out story must be considered in the light of the purpose of the Gospel in general and the author's theology and motives. Jesus in his obedience to and dependence upon the father is portrayed as having been given the authority from the Father to give life to whom he will (5:26). This could well be, as Otto Piper once stated in a class at Princeton Seminary, the most significant theological verse in the Gospel. John used the incident to bring out his own presentation of Jesus, his person, and his powers, thus making this the greatest and the last of the "signs," depicting Jesus' triumph over death itself. The question of faith and history in John's Gospel is a large hermeneutical problem. We are quite aware by now that we cannot look for history apart from faith and history, and our problem in interpretation is to balance faith and history. Or to put it another way, can we find a place in the fourth Gospel for history as well as faith, a place for the historical Jesus as well as the Christ of faith? Many think that there is a historical basis to this event which has been elaborated in characteristic fashion by John. John used it to bring out his own presentation of Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ. It is clear in any case that the narrative is told for the sake of the teaching which is included and the symbolism which-is intended. Several features support this view. The illness of Lazarus is intended to show the glory of God (v. 4; cf. 9:3). Jesus deliberately delays coming, when he hears the news of Lazarus' death (v. 6). John here definitely emphasizes that the Logos acts independently of all human advice and pressure; his "time" is his own (cf. 2:4; 8:6-8). Jesus knows without being told that in the meantime Lazarus had died (v. 14), for as the Son of God he knows all things (cf. 1:48; 2:25). His actions are motivated by a desire to inculcate "belief" in the disciples (v. 15) and even when he prays it is for the sake of the crowd, not because he needs to (v. 42). Nevertheless John shows Jesus as a real man, one who was moved by the grief of others (vv. 33, 35). Some have thought that the account is to be regarded more as a kind of "sermon illustration" or parable than a historical event. When Jesus talks with Martha about the current expectation of a general resurrection from the dead, Martha agrees. But he corrects this by stating that the one believing in him does not really die at all, and that eternal life is a present possession (cf. vv. 24-25). The only other biblical reference to a "Lazarus" is in the parable Luke has about the rich man and a beggar called Lazarus (16:19ff.). Strangely enough, it is the only parable in the Gospels where a character is given a proper name! After he had died,

neither Lazarus nor anyone else was permitted to return to earth to convert the brothers of the rich man, for even the Jews would not be convinced even if someone did return from the dead. John follows up this hint in Luke's parable by showing that when Lazarus did return the leaders of the Jews were still unconvinced of Jesus' claims and even hardened in their attitude. John also probably had in mind the view that one of the "signs" of the Messianic age would be the "giving of new life to the spiritually dead." He seeks by this story to show this as an actuality. Let us now look in a little detail at the enfolding story:

9.1 A Crisis in Bethany (11:1-4)

When Lazarus had become ill, his sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill (v. 3). The mere fact that they sent for Jesus indicates how serious his illness was. But when Jesus heard the news, he told the messenger and his disciples that it was not a sickness unto final death, but that by it both the Father and the Son would receive glory (v. 4) In his symbolic way John records this to intimate that the events connected with this illness would be related to his death on the cross, through which Jesus would receive his greatest glory. This saying which in advance interprets the sign of the raising of the dead man also includes in its reference Jesus' 6wn death and his own resurrection. The 'Son of God' is not just calling this dead man into life, but also, because it is a sign, announcing his own resurrection, as well. In fact the raising of the dead Lazarus leads, in John's version of history, to Jesus' death, a death, however, in which God reveals His glory.

9.1.1 The Strange Reaction of Jesus (11:5-16)

Even though Jesus loved these people, he did not respond immediately to their need. Instead, he remained in Perea for two days. Such an action must have seemed strange to his friends then, even as it does to us until we read the entire story. Obviously he waited until Lazarus was dead. In fact, Lazarus probably was dead, or very near death, at the moment when Jesus first heard about the illness. At that time he was about two or three days' journey from Bethany. Finally, Jesus announced to his disciples his purpose to return to Judea. Remembering the murderous purpose of the Jewish rulers, the disciples advised otherwise. In somewhat vague language Jesus replied that his enemies could not accomplish their purpose until his "hour" had come (vv; 9, 10). Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep" (v. 11). Interpreting the word "sleep" in the physical sense, they observed that Lazarus must be improving. Then Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14). Furthermore, he was glad for their sakes that he was not there to heal him. For as the result of the death of Lazarus, they would have an additional reason to believe in him (v. 15). When Jesus insisted on going, Thomas, one of the Twelve, said to the others, "Let us go also, that we may die with him" (v. 16). We can admire this heroic loyalty on the part of Thomas and of the others, for they went with Jesus even though they thought that they were facing certain death in doing so.

9.1.2 Jesus' Reception in Bethany (11:l7-37)

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, he found that Lazarus had been entombed for four days. Many Jews from Jerusalem had come to the home to mourn with and to bring comfort to the bereaved sisters. Martha, hearing that Jesus was coming, went out to meet him. But Mary, probably overwhelmed that Jesus was coming, remained in the house. Martha, always the practical one, was probably busy looking after her guests. Even though deep sorrow possessed her, life must still go on. When Martha met Jesus, she said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 21). Her words contained a mingled faith and rebuke. The latter indicates the intimate friendship between Jesus and these friends. But even though the sister was bereaved and somewhat disappointed in Jesus, she still had hope that whatever he should ask of God, God would grant it (v. 22). Was this possibly a veiled request that Jesus would even now restore her brother to life? Jesus assured her that her brother would rise again. She naturally understood him to be referring to the final resurrection, in which she believed. This did not, however, relieve her present sorrow. Then Jesus spoke words to her which became to all bereaved ones ever since, a source of infinite strength when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (v. 26). Did Martha really believe this? How could she understand the implication of it? Nevertheless, her response was the greatest confession at faith in Jesus as the Messiah which is recorded in the Gospels! Yes, I think it is even greater than that of Peter of Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:16). Peter made his confession from the pinnacle of exhilaration, at the climax of having viewed a long series of mighty works performed by Jesus. But Martha, on the other hand, made hers from the pit of despair and sorrow. She had sent for Jesus in her hour of great need. Insofar as she could tell, he had failed her. Yet she still believed in him. Her confession was, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (v. 27). "Believe" is a verb form (perfect tense) meaning I have believed in the past, still am believing, and will continue to believe. She had this faith when things went well, she still has it when things are dark; she would continue to have it in the future despite what might happen. Luke tells us that Martha was a practical woman. Now , John tells us that she was also a woman with a tremendous and rugged faith. These two natures are not necessarily incompatible. Having said this, Martha went to get her sister. By this time they had arrived at the house, so when Mary heard that Jesus was there, she ran and fell at his feet. Then she repeated the words which no doubt she and Martha had said to each other, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 32). But beyond that, there seemed to be no words of hope, such as Martha had expressed. Jesus' own emotions were caught up in this scene of mourning ev. 33). So as they were going towards the tomb, we are told "Jesus wept," or more literally, "Jesus burst into tears" (v. 35). His human sympathy entered freely into the sorrow of Martha and Mary.[67] But even in this tender scene unbelief raised its skeptical head. Some of the Jews noted how much Jesus

loved Lazarus. But others asked, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying? (v. 37).

9.1.3 "Lazarus, Come Forth"(11: 39-44)

By this time they had arrived at the tomb. It was a cave over the entrance of which had been placed a stone for the purpose of keeping out wild animals and prowlers. This was a common mode of burial at the time. Modern tourists are shown such a cave in Bethany, reported to be, and quite possibly could be, the one in which Lazarus was buried. Jesus told them to remove the stone. This much man could do. But Martha protested that Lazarus' body was already decaying, since he had been dead for four days. She was perhaps conscious of the Jewish tradition that after death the soul hovers about the body for three days. hoping to reenter it, but on the fourth day it leaves it. Martha's concern was a natural concern about a decaying body. Surely John is concerned to indicate that there could be no possibility that Lazarus was in a coma. for the death signs were all there. There must be no superstitious question about what Jesus was to do. It would reveal him in his deity, and his lordship over death. So with a mild rebuke to Martha (v. 40), Jesus waited until the stone was removed. Then after a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father for answering his prayer even before he prayed it, Jesus spoke. With a loud voice he cried, "Lazarus, come out" (v. 43). The "loud voice" was likely not for Lazarus' benefit, but rather Jesus wanted all present to hear and to see that ,Lazarus responded simultaneously with his call. So Lazarus came out, bound in his graveclothes in the customary manner used in Jewish and other ancient burials. Once again Jesus called upon man to do what man can do, "Unbind him, and let him go" (v. 44). Those who were present had viewed the greatest of Jesus' "signs" in his ministry. Was this a resurrection in the usual sense of that word? Hardly so. Paul in I Corinthians 15:20 says that Jesus is himself the "first fruits out of the realm of the dead. "Resurrection" usually means to come to life to die no more. That which happened to Lazarus was more of a restoration or resuscitation. He who was truly dead was restored to life again, but his body once more would die. He was not immortal. Thereafter, he will be raised in the final resurrection to die no more.

9.1.4 The People's Reaction to the "Sign" (11:45-53)

We might expect that all who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead would have believed in him as the Son of God. While some did so, many others rushed back to Jerusalem to report the event to the Pharisees. Knowing that the Pharisees (unlike the Sadducees) believed in the resurrection, we might also expect them to be overjoyed with the news. However, they were so committed in their opposition to Jesus that they simply reported the matter to the chief priests, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Thus there was immediate trouble. Again (as in 7:45-52) the leaders are at a loss to know what to do about Jesus. Here we see hatred and terror! The priests calculated

that a popular movement in support of Jesus would attract the attention of the Roman rulers, who would put down with a firm hand anything that threatened the security of the country. The Jews as a consequence would lose their national privileges, so it was in the interests of the native rulers to prevent this (v. 48). To avert this, Caiaphas suggests the sacrifice of one man, in order to save the nation (v. 50). As so frequently in this Gospel, his words have a double meaning. John makes his advice accord with the Christian doctrine of the nature of the death of Jesus (vv. 51-52). The high priest was supposed to be able at times to exercise the gift of prophecy. The irony is that, as his readers knew, the very thing feared by the priests the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the nation had actually come about, although from a very different cause from the one envisaged by them. At this point we begin to discern John's purpose in recording the raising of Lazarus. This event fully demonstrated that Jesus was lord over death. The synoptic Gospels had recorded the two previous raisings from the dead by Jesus, as we mentioned previously, but they had both occurred in Galilee. Now he had raised Lazarus within two miles of the Jewish temple, the sear of the Sadducean power and Jews from Jerusalem had seen it. Many others would go to Bethany to see this man who had been raised from the dead by Jesus (12:10. 11). Reports from Galilee about such matters the Sadducees could easily deny as being the idle stories of simple and rebellious people. But they could not deny the raising of Lazarus. So, in a sense, Jesus had thrown down the gauntlet to them at their most sensitive stop and this almost within the shadow of the temple itself! Immediately, they took up the matter. They called the Sanhedrin into session in order to deal with him. Up to this point the major opposition to Jesus had been left up to the Pharisees, with an occasional assist from the Sadducees. But from this time on the Sadducees were to assume charge. It is an interesting question of debate whether the Pharisees alone could ever have brought Jesus to death. They might have argued and worried him to death, and pestered him in his teaching, but they did not have the power of the temple with them. However, the Sadducees were realists and they had the power. They wasted little time in argument. So when Jesus dared to challenge them directly, from the human standpoint his doom was sealed. When the Sanhedrin was assembled, a general discussion ensued. "What are we to do?" (RSV), or more literally, "What are we doing? For this man keeps on doing (present tense) many signs" (v. 47). From the viewpoint of the Sadducees the most recent one was the most unforgivable. This sounds like an accusation of the Sadducees against the Pharisees. The latter had been doing plenty, but with no apparent results. And then they revealed their true reason for opposing Jesus. If they let Jesus alone, all men would believe in him and the result could be that, "the Romans will come and destroy both our (holy) place and our nation" (v. 48). Notice that they put "holy place" (literally in Greek, "our place") before "nation." Jesus was a threat to their places of power among the Jews. The Pharisees were opposed to Roman rule, but they posed as the teachers of Israel. The people were leaving them to follow this unaccredited teacher from Nazareth. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were perfectly willing for the Roman rule to continue, as long as they were permitted by the Romans to enjoy a certain amount of ruling power

in order that they could grow wealthier and more influential thereby. However, Jesus was a threat to the privileges and power of both groups. If things continued as they were now going, they foresaw a revolution against Rome. Such could have resulted in but one end: a defeat by the Romans, and with it the loss of their "place and nation"! This general discussion was getting them nowhere. So Caiaphas, the high priest, took charge. Said he, "you know nothing at all. This was certainly true as far as any solution to their problem with Jesus was concerned. So he made a definite proposal. "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish': (v. 50). (The preposition here is hyper = "as a substitute"). It was as simple as that. Either Jesus must die, or the nation, including them, would be destroyed. It was obviously to their profit that the former should happen rather than the latter. Therefore, the entire matter was to be decided, not on what was right, but on the basis of expediency. It is interesting to note that John here inserts a parenthetical statement, noting that Caiaphas did not say this of himself. He did not really know what he was saying, says John: "He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (vv. 51-52). This, apparently, is John's interpretation after the fact. Unknowingly, Cailaphas had prophesied the substitutionary atonement. He had predicted how Jesus would die as a substitute. However, he had no knowledge or interest in such matters. He simply made a grim proposal as to how the members of the Sanhedrin might save their own skins. But God had an overruling purpose for it all. The time for the vote of the Sanhedrin had arrived. The question before them was, to their way of thinking, quite simple. Either they could go on doing nothing and lose everything in the process, or they could bring Jesus to his death, and thus eliminate the problem. It was their loss versus Jesus' death. They voted for Jesus' death to save their skins! We may safely conclude that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were absent from this meeting. Nicodemus had shown previously that he had sympathy for Jesus (cf. 7:50-52)1 and Luke clearly implies that Joseph of Arimathea was absent from the session of the Sanhedrin which voted Jesus to be guilty of death (cf. Luke 23:51, "who had not consented to their purpose and deed"). These two men were associated together later in Jesus' burial, as we remember. In all likelihood Caiaphas, knowing of their secret discipleship, did not inform them of this special meeting. So from that day forward the Sanhedrin took counsel among themselves to put Jesus to death (v. 53). They had often intended to do it in the past. The Pharisees on more than one occasion had been on the verge of stoning him. Now, however, following the raising of Lazarus. Jesus' death became the avowed program of the Sanhedrin, the official ruling body among the Jews.

9.1.5 Jesus' Reaction (11:54)

Evidently Jesus heard of the resolve of the Sanhedrin. At least John implies this when he says, "Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews" (v. 54a). He did not

therefore fear death, but he would not take undue chances with his life. He has an "hour." But until that hour should come, he kept out of the way of his scheming enemies. Leaving the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, therefore, he went into the hill country not far from the Judean wilderness. The location of the village of Ephraim, to which he went, is not definitely known today, since this is its only mention in the New Testament. But since it was "near to the wilderness," it must have been somewhere northeast of Jerusalem. This was a sparsely settled area, and would provide Jesus with an ideal retreat until he was ready to travel northward into Galilee. From there he will travel in a caravan bound for Jerusalem and the Passover. His "hour" was only a few weeks away. It now remains for us to discuss two important subjects in connection with this chapter. First, we should look at some of the interpretive and theological problems involved in this chapter. Secondly, we should discuss the spiritual significance of Jesus' revelation as the vResurrection and the Life."

9.2 Obvious Problems of the Raising of Lazarus

We have already stated that this is one of the most difficult narratives in John's Gospel, perhaps in all of the New Testament. Why is this the case? Generally speaking, there are two attitudes of Biblical scholars today concerning the Raising of Lazarus! 1) Some scholars find no difficulty in believing that John is narrating what really happened, and interprets it for the early Church. 2) But others are skeptical, and argue that the Lazarus story is fictional, and composed by John on the basis of synoptic materials, in particular, the parable of Lazarus and Dives (Luke 16:19-31), with its closing reference to resurrection from the dead. This latter attitude is predicated on several obvious problems in the narrative. A. A dead man is said to have been restored to life. Jesus definitely interprets the references to "sleep" in terms of physical death. It is impossible, as some would contend, that Lazarus was never really dead, because of the fact of the comment by Jesus himself, "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14), and the care taken to emphasize that Lazarus had been dead "four days" (vv. 17, 39), and was thus in any human understanding thoroughly dead. As far as John is concerned we are meant to understand that a miracle did take place, and that it was momentous in its significance. B. This narrative occurs only in John's Gospel, and it is hard to account for the fact that the synoptic Gospels do not know of it. While there are evident Johannine characteristics in the episode, as related by John, there are also features in the account which support the possibility that its background was traditional, and that its origin was historical. In view of the increased respect which is being shown towards the historical value of John's Gospel in our day, we no longer have to begin automatically with the assumption that the Lazarus tradition is unhistorical. Further, the other healing miracles in John (the official's son, the sick man and the blind man) stern from a traditional basis, with synoptic associations; so there is no reason why the Lazarus account should not be traditional, even if there is no synoptic parallel. This account is full of vivid and

circumstantial details, suggesting the presence of eye-witnesses Cd. vv. 20, 28, 33, 35, 44 et al.). The naming of the principal character in a healing-resurrection story is equally unusual in John and in the synoptics, but in both traditions it occurs once. As we have Lazarus, so we have Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46; cf. also Jairus in Mark 5:22f.). The "fading out" of the principal character in a healing resurrection miracle is typical of the Gospels generally, so that the virtual non-appearance of Lazarus after his raising need not be regarded as unlikely or untraditional (especially if, having been raised, he were still alive when John wrote). It could well be, too, that the silence of Lazarus may also result from John's desire to make him a universal figure, rather than to individualize him. So the fact that the raising of ,Lazarus is unknown beyond the fourth Gospel and that the figure of Lazarus himself in any form is unknown to the synoptic writers, need not constitute a real problem. What is historical in the Gospels is no longer determined by what is synoptic. Further, the lack of knowledge about Lazarus in Mark is just conceivably explained by the absence of Peter from the scene (Peter is not mentioned by name between John 6:68 and 13:6). Note that in John 11:16 Thomas and not Peter is the spokesman, so perhaps Peter was absent. Thus Mark would not have it in his traditional material. C. Another problem is that the Lazarus episode interrupts John's recitation of the passion events, and in John alone it is the short-term cause of those events. As it stands, it seems to interrupt the beginning of the Johannine passion narrative. By the time we reach the end of John 10 all seems set for the passion of Jesus. The confrontation with the Jews is at an end; and now that the identity which Jesus is claiming for himself has been made clear, his arrest is only a matter of time. "Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands" (10:39). But John 11 is linked to chapter 9 by the use of the "light" imagery, and to chapter 10 by means of the theme of "life". While in the other Gospels the triumphal entry and the cleansing entry and the cleansing of the temple are the immediate causes of Jesus' arrest, in John it is the raising of Lazarus that provokes the final attempt of the Jews to take Jesus, and the triumphal entry brings forth little more than an aside from the Pharisees (12:19). D. A final problem may ask what is the point of a miracle which merely protracts physical life, if its real purpose is to be instructive about life in the spirit? As John uses the episode, the death and resurrection of Lazarus point forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Since John's purpose in the Gospel is to reveal Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, so that believers might have life in him, this story does fit into his general argument of Jesus as the life-giver. Without attempting to further answer the problems raised in connection with this text, let us say that John begins with material which has the basis in the historical account of an actual miracle. He develops it, giving an interpretation which has a lasting value for the Church in its struggles with the spiritual meanings of the teaching of Jesus.

9.2.1 "Resurrection and Life" (11:25-26)

Jesus is bearing witness to himself as the one who has been given and fully possesses (5:26) the power which belongs to God alone to "give life" (cf. 5:21). This power, which bas been

demonstrated beyond doubt by the other great signs performed on the sick (cf. 4:50-53), receives its highest expression in this raising of a dead man. The two verses are parallel and synonymous. "Resurrection" and "life" are also synonyms. By giving believers life, Jesus also became the raiser, the life-giver. For the believers the hour of resurrection or raising from the dead has now arrived with the voice of Jesus. "I am the resurrection." This is the direct answer to Martha's profession in verse 24. Jesus is the resurrection in the sense that whoever believes in him, though he may go to the grave, shall come to eternal life. Life is that life from above which is born through the Spirit and conquers physical death. Apart from Jesus Christ there is no resurrection and no life in tile "real" sense; and where he is, resurrection and life must be. "I am the life." Whoever receives the gift of life through belief in Jesus will never die a spiritual death, for this life is eternal life, the "God-kind" of life. The evangelist is thinking on the two levels of the obvious event and the underlying symbolism. The evangelist did not intend to deny the factual character of the ancient miracle story and use it simply as a "sign." In a very significant discussion, William Temple discusses the significance of this terminology as follows:

How can he actually be the Resurrection? He might be its cause, its donor, its controller; how can he be a future event? Of course, there is a forcing of language to express an unutterable thought. But we can put part of what it means in other words. Fellowship with Christ is participation in the divine life which finds its fullest expression in triumph over death. Life is a larger word than Resurrection, but Resurrection is, so to speak, the crucial quality of Life. and the inclusion of it therefore adds vastly to the effectiveness, though not to the actual content of the saying. There is no denial of a general resurrection at the last day; but there is an insistence that for those who are in fellowship with Jesus the life to which that resurrection leads is already present fact.[68]

We could call this the chapter of faith, because it demonstrates the meaning of faith. People who could not, or would not, believe have always found this chapter on the Resurrection of Lazarus in particular a stumbling block to believing. The raising of Lazarus introduces the question of eschatology. What view of the last things does John teach? When informed of the death of Lazarus, Jesus affirmed that he would rise again (11:23), which Martha understood in terms of the last day (11:24). This was natural enough because resurrection was thought of as an event of the last day. Jesus did not deny that this would be the case with Lazarus. In addition he drew attention, however, to his own present significance (11:25). Thus the Lazarus event is to be understood as a sign with two levels of meaning: 1. The believer "who lives" shall never die (11:26), having already passed from death to life (5: 24). But this does not exclude physical death, for even Jesus, who is himself "the life," gave himself up to death. Nevertheless, eternal life is experienced in the present, pointing to Jesus present significance. The raising of Lazarus also pointed to Jesus' present significance, and beyond. 2. Lazarus, raised to life, was to die physically again, as many believers had died, when his Gospel was written. But this resurrection pointed beyond itself to the resurrection on the last day (6:40). The eternal life, experienced now, cannot ever be terminated, not even by death. The believer will live forever

(6:51.; 58; 8:51-52; 10:28; 11:26). The gift of life in the present will only be revealed fully at the resurrection on the last day. As we look back at the record of Jesus' raising Lazarus in the chapter, we see how this message is the heart of the Gospel message so much needed in our own day. Faced with decay all about us our marriages, our families, our industrial life with its strikes, our politics with its Watergates and Abscams all that we can do is to believe him who says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Here is our hope! With God's initiative of love, we can receive the promise of forgiveness and new life. Then we can say with Martin Luther that the words, "In the midst of life we are in death," should. rather be changed to be, "In the midst of death, we are in life." A generation that has such faith can both live and die. The raising of Lazarus suggests three important lessons for both church and individual Christians in our own time: 1. Even the love of God permits pain, sorrow and heartache in order that individuals may be driven to the Christ so that his love, sympathy and power may be the more manifest, 2. Love may leave prayers at times unanswered, or postponed. The fact that we pray does not mean that we force God to act immediately, or in the way we think is the best, or at least most desirable from our point of view. 3. God's love when it comes always comes with blessings which are indescribably and immeasurably glorious to make certain that glory comes to the Father, not necessarily to us. It is in this way that Christ deals with his needy ones. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" is the greatest of the "I am" revelations in the fourth Gospel. Christ reveals himself as the one who has been given and fully possesses the power which belongs to God alone (5:26), to give life and to restore life. In the case of Lazarus we see how the gift is used by the Son of God in a humanly impossible situation. Only faith can receive this glorious offer of life.

Notes

[67]The verb translated "wept" is in Greek edakrusen, literally in the aorist tense "burst into tears." It is used here only in the New Testament, and therefore different than the verbs used in verse 33 of Mary's "weeping." When it is recorded in Luke 19:41 that Jesus "weeps" over the city of Jerusalem, the verb used is klaiein, the same one used of Mary and the Jews in verse 33.

[68]William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel, p. 176.

Chapter 10

ABIDING IN CHRIST (John 15: 1-27)

As Jesus and his disciples walked through the streets of Jerusalem towards Gethsemane, he continued to teach them. He used a familiar illustration from their pastoral life in Judea, leading up to the condition under which they were to render fruitful service to God and their obligation of "fruit-bearing" in the future days. He uses the allegory of the vine and its branches to illustrate several basic truths.

10.1 The Vine and the Branches (15:1-3)

In the Old Testament the vine is often treated as a symbol for Israel. A psalmist spoke of the nation as a vine which had been brought out of Egypt (Psalm 80:lff.) and the prophets frequently used this same figure to denote the unworthiness of Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1). Jesus likened himself to the "true vine" with his Father as the "vinedresser" (v. 1). The disciples were the branches which grew out of the stem of the vine. Only as the branches abide in the vine can they bear .fruit. "For," said Jesus, "apart from me you can do nothing" (v. 5). Fruitless branches will be pruned away in order that the vine may bear more fruit (v. 2). We note the progression here from "bearing fruit" (vv. 2, 4), to bearing "more fruit" (v. 2), to bearing "much fruit" (vv. S, 8). We should not understand the pruning as a loss of salvation for the subject is fruit-bearing, not salvation. Jesus clearly employed this well-known figure of speech to express the basic idea of dependence upon the vine for fruit-bearing. Failure to abide in him would result in a wasted, fruitless life (v. 6; cf. I Corinthians 3:9-15). It is therefore absolutely essential that the disciples should abide in Christ and in his love (vv. 7-11). The early Christians thought of the church as the "new Israel," so the metaphor would come naturally to the writer. Here Jesus himself represents the true Israel, the "real vine," and his branches are his disciples. Paul uses the symbolism of an olive tree in a similar manner (Romans

11:17-24), but there are basic differences. In both cases, the branches are broken (cut) off because of unbelief. In our text in John, this is expressed in terms of the failure to abide in the vine. For John Jesus is the vine, while the branches are the Jewish believers. This, of course, is typical of John's christological emphasis. But Paul in Romans, dealing with the Gentile situation, refers to the people of God (not Jesus) as the olive tree. Israel is represented by the branches broken off. Israel is no longer the people of God because of unbelief. In Romans, the branches grafted in are the believing Gentiles. This is somewhat different that John's picture of Jesus as the vine, and the disciples as the branches, as we have it in this text. This is one of the most extended of the figures of speech in the Gospel, a real allegory, in which each particular is made to stand for something. The vine needs to be pruned (v. 2), the disciples, as "clean branches," do not need to be purged (vv. 3-4); the fruit they bear is the witness of their lives to the success of their mission (v. 5). Unworthy members are cut off (v. 6). John has in mind conditions of the church of his own day, in which not all members came up to the standard. The possibility of "fruitbearing" depended upon their abiding in him (vv. 4, 5, 7). The obligation to service rested upon the fact that they had been chosen to serve (v. 16). The union between the believers and Christ is based on his whole work in life, death, and victorious resurrection. Only in Christ can Christians live. In union with him there is a fruitfulness of true service to God, of answered prayer, and of obedience in love. All who are united to him, are also united to one another in this same love.

10.2 Love One Another (15:4-11)

The command for the disciples to love one another is emphatic (15:12, 17; cf. 13:34). The command is linked with the reminder of Jesus' love because it can only be fulfilled as the disciples are aware of Jesus' love for them (v. 9). It can only be fulfilled through faith. The example of Jesus' love is repeated in the analogy of 15:13: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Jesus will do this for them, and they must be willing to do the same for each other. Jesus' love is seen clearly also in the washing of the disciples' feet (13:l4ff.), and supremely in laying down his life for them, reminding the reader of the nature of the love by which Jesus' disciples would be known. Love for one another is only possible for those who abide in Jesus (15:4-17). To abide in Jesus is to abide in his Word (8:32), to keep Jesus' commandments, to abide in Jesus' love. Abiding emphasizes the obedience of faith, through which the believer is aware of Jesus' love, and then Jesus' love becomes effective through the believer. Thus it is through Jesus' Word, given to the disciples, and understood personally in the experience of the Spirit, that the disciples are made one just as the Father and the Son are one (17:2lff.).

10.3 Chosen in Christ (15:12-17)

The figure of speech of the Vine and branches is now dropped (apart from one reference to fruitbearing in verse 16) and the discourse develops into general remarks on the theme of fellowship between Christ and his disciples. This is the only place in all of the Gospels where Jesus calls his disciples his "friends." The command to love one another is repeated (cf. 13:34). The extent of Jesus' love and sacrifice seems to be narrower here than it is in the synoptic Gospels and in the view of St. Paul, who held that Christ died for sinners and the wicked in general (Romans 5:6-8). Here he is said to lay down his life for his friends (v. 13). But elsewhere in the Gospel, he frequently refers to his universal love (e.g., 3:16, etc.). In John 13:16, Jesus had spoken of the relationship between him and the disciples as that of Lord and servant or slave. Now he calls them his friends. "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (v. 14). A slave does not know what his lord is doing. But as his friends, Jesus has made known to them the full revelation of the Father. So again, as his friends, they have an obligation to bear fruit. He has chosen and appointed them for this very purpose. They are to keep on bearing fruit, knowing that in such service they have the assurance that whatsoever they shall ask in His name the Father will give it to them.

10.4 Chosen in Christ (John 15;16)

While in this Gospel the purpose of the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is to lead to faith in him as the proper response, we nevertheless have a strong emphasis on the initiative of God in the whole process of salvation. So in this particular verse, we should not be surprised to hear, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it you." Our action is all response, for the initiative is with God, who chose us. The verb John used is eklegomai, to choose, to select. It is closely related to the expression used in I Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race" (genos eklekton). The issue of election is involved here and it reflects John's understanding of the church. The disciples were chosen, selected by Jesus, or, rather they were given to him by the Father (17:6, 12). C. K. Barrett notes that this teaching is quite different than that of the initiated gnostics, who had themselves chosen their way of life. But here, John is very careful (as are also the Synoptics) to show that Jesus chooses, calls, and appoints his disciples. The initiative is entirely his. In the Greek text, the ego is emphatic. Consequently, this idea could hardly have been borrowed from similar gnostic teachings, as some might infer. [69] We were chosen first and foremost for fellowship with Christ (cf. Mark 3;14, "that they might be with him"). That is our first duty, to abide in him. But he chose us also to send us forth as his witnesses (cf. Mark 3:14, "and that he might send them forth to make the proclamation"). A Christian, who abides in Christ and Christ in him, exerts an influence among his companions at work or play, in the shop or factory or

directors' meeting or in congress. Nothing can erase this characteristic. But even more, such a person becomes a channel through whom the love of God may flow in blessing wherever he directs his attention. This emphasis governs the interpretation of the whole chapter. People are not Jesus' friends because they have a natural affinity with him, but because he has named them his friends. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). If men lay down their lives in love, it is because he first laid down his life for them. So the church today, just like the apostolic group to which it is the successor, consists of the gathered children of God (11:52, "... but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad"). John lays down very clearly that the right to become a child of God can be given only by God and has nothing to do with natural human properties (1:12), and that rebirth as a child of God comes by water and Spirit (3:5). Sonship is then a gift which men receive from God, and which has been made possible by Jesus alone. Along with this is the teaching that becoming a son is not a matter only of chance. There are those who are Christ's sheep, even though they must be brought by him into the flock. Jesus says (10;16), "And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice." A similar picture is given by Christ's word in 18:37, "Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." Elsewhere it is stated (6:44), "No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." He chooses Christ, who has already been chosen by him. John does not use the predestinarian language of St. Paul (Romans 8:28-30) but instead uses the simple words choose, call, draws, etc. According to John as well as I Peter, Christians are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (I Peter 1:2). "In speaking of those whom he has chosen, the Johannine Jesus is undoubtedly addressing himself to all Christians who are the 'elect' or . 'chosen' of God (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 2:4)," says Raymond Brown in discussing this doctrine of God's initiative. [70] As the disciples were chosen by Christ, and sent by him with the Gospel into the world, so we Christians likewise are chosen and sent. The Twelve were given a mission that all Christians must fulfill, "... that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide." The Christians are thus elected and called in order that they may offer to God a pure worship "in Spirit and truth" (4:23f.). This kind of true worship consists in the unity of men in Christ, and thus both with one another and with God, and in obedience to God through Christ. Such a unity is the object of the prayer of Jesus (17:22f.). To have faith in Christ is to offer to God the sacrifice of perfect obedience. He himself is the center and the means of the worship of God. He is man's access to God (14:6) and by him men offer their worship to God. When men ask Jesus how they may work the works of God, he replies, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (6: 29) In summary, love cannot be commanded; neither can it be manufactured. But, fortunately, there is also the fact of the divine initiative. Jesus' love in laying down his life for us has its roots in the divine nature and purpose, for "God is love." Those of us who were baptized as infants should never forget this. We became God's children not because we had good parents, nor because we were intrinsically good. But God had acted in giving His promise of the Gospel, and the

church by faithfully transmitting this promise and invitation confronted us with this love of God. Our being Christians is no doing of ours, any more than our being civilized; it is something done to us and for us, not by us, though we have to make appropriate response in the form of obedience prompted by love.

10.5 The Disciples and the World (15:18-25)

Frequently in this Gospel the "world" stands for all that is against truth and right. A similar attitude is expressed in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The members of the Essene sect had separated themselves from the world in order to live a purer ascetic life style. John is thinking of the tension between the world and Christians of his own day, and inculcating the necessity for love within the Christian fellowship, to be able to face the hatred of those outside. The command to love one another (v. 17) is given in the context of the hatred of the world for Christ's followers (v. 18). There are similar sayings in the synoptic Gospels. Matthew 10:22 (= Luke 21:17) is similar in idea to vv. 18-19 here, and Matthew 10:24f (= Luke 6:40) seems to be similar to v. 20 in this chapter. In their obedient service of Christ, the disciples are to expect to experience the hatred of the world. If the world hates Jesus, it will also hate his followers. The world loves its own. But since the disciples are not of this world, the world will persecute them as it has persecuted Jesus, their lord. The Christian Gospel is a judgment against the world's sin, for it both reveals the world's sin and is at the same time God's witness against it.

10.6 The Witness of the Paraclete (15:26-27)

When the Holy Spirit comes in power, He will bear witness of Jesus. And since the disciples have been with Jesus from the beginning, they, in the power of the Spirit, are to bear witness also to him. This is the third of these sayings about the Paraclete. The Paraclete, again called the Spirit of truth, previously spoken of as "sent" by the Father "in my name" (14:26), is here said to be sent by Jesus from the Father. The relation between these statements caused a great controversy in the early Christian centuries and even led to a schism in the Church over the words "and the son." John, however, was not laying down a theological definition of the activities of God and Christ in relation to the Spirit. He is simply encouraging his disciples in an antagonistic world. Let us look a little more carefully at the "Paraclete"[71] term in the Farewell Discourses (chaps. 14-16) of St. John's Gospel. The titles, "Paraclete" and "The Spirit of Truth," occur only in these chapters in the Gospel, and "The Holy Spirit" occurs only in 14:26 in its full Greek form. Nevertheless, the teaching is consistent with the Gospel as a whole. It serves to clarify Jesus' relationship with the Spirit and to explain the development of faith and knowledge after Jesus' glorification. The background of John's use of "paraclete" remains unknown, and even the question of a precise and accurate translation finds no unanimous

answer. "Advocate" is suggested by the passages which deal with the persecution of the disciples (15: 8-25; 16: 2-3, 32), when a "defender" is needed, in the British meaning of "advocate" as advocatus, spokesman or defender. But the Paraclete is the one who convicts the world (16:8-11); he is the witness from Jesus who is on trial (15:26), and a recurring theme elsewhere (5:31-40; 8:13-19; 18:19- 24, 33-38). The witness of the Paraclete vindicates Jesus and convicts the world, "Advocate" seems to be the best translation in I John 2:1, "... but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. As guilty sinners, we need a spokesman for us, a defense attorney, and "advocate" has that meaning in I John 2:1, where it is applied to Jesus. The "Counselor" of the Revised Standard Version may in some cases preserve this meaning. "Comforter," used generally in the King James Version, is suggested by some contexts dealing with Jesus' announcements of his departure to his sorrowing disciples (16:6-7). But then the theme of judgement appears in 16:8ff. Bu1tmann describes the Spirit as the "power within the Church which brings forth both the knowledge and proclamation of the Word."[72] The Paraclete is the prophetic Spirit, the inspirer of the testimony to Jesus through which the world is judged. So 15:26-27 refers to the one inspired witness of those who had been with Jesus from the beginning. The Paraclete is known only by those who believe in Jesus (14:17) and his activity is completely Christocentric (14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15). Just as Jesus' mission is dependent on the Father, the mission of the Paraclete is dependent on the Father and the Son. His revealing work originates with the Father, but is concerned with the Son who is manifest through the activity of the Paraclete. In Johannine terms the Word also is "spirit" (without the definite aritcle). But John also speaks of "the Spirit" (1:33; 3:34; 7:39); "the Holy Spirit" (to pneuma to hagion, 1:33; 14:26); "the Spirit of truth" (14:17; 15:26; 16:13); "the (another) Paraclete (14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In these references the Spirit is spoken of as "he." He has a relation to the Father and the Son and personal functions such as teaching, leading, convicting, witnessing, are ascribed to him. With such statements John, more than any other writer in the New Testament, presents us with the evidence which forced the Early Church, almost against its will, to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity. The Spirit plays a significant role in the work of revelation. There was no effective revelation prior to the .glorification of Jesus when the Spirit was given (7:39; 14:7, 9; l6:30f.).

Notes

[69]C. K. Barrett, Op. cit., p. 478.

[70]Raymond E. Brown, Ope cite, II, p. 683.

[71]It has been argued that "the Paraclete passages" are insertions into the Gospel from a source. But this theory runs into the problem of all source theories in John, the apparent unity of the Gospel in style. From a theological point of view, these passages develop and unify themes in the Gospel as a whole. Further, if the passages come from a source, why were they were not inserted in one block of material instead of a number of fragments scattered throughout three chapters?

[72]R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. 2, p. 88.

Chapter 11

JOHN FOR TODAY

There is a general renewal of interest in the Gospel of John today occasioned by the "new look" at the Gospel, and the consequent new significance of its teachings, with its authoritative revelation of the person of Jesus. The Gospel combines lucidity with depth, so there is a challenge to both the lay and professional scholar in the interpretation of the text. Since there is no localism, but a world-encompassing outlook, even to describing Jesus as the "Savior of the world" (4:42), it is truly ecumenical, and a ban on sectarianism in every form. This is especially significant for an age like ours that seeks ecumenicity and desperately needs international good will. In a time of great social and political unrest, there is a deep yearning for life's true meaning. Today it is not as in the sixteenth century a matter of personal guilt and its forgiveness, as the Reformation theologians had to deal with, but a persistent questioning about the meaning and purpose of life in general. Today people are wrestling with the apparent meaninglessness of life. The rebellions of students of the 60's against the established order and institutions has somewhat subsided, but the question of what makes life worthwhile is still the basic question of thinking people. They are asking: Why are things the way they are? Why do poverty, injustice, and inequity mar so much of our developed and modern society? Where can we discover lasting values by which to live, and meaningful ideals for which to strive? How can we find justice in a world of widespread prejudice, and equity in a society in which privilege exists for only the very fortunate few? Reality, genuiness of being, authentic existence, and the meaning of truth these are the goals that plague the hearts of many earnest young men and women these days. It is for such beings that this Gospel was particularly written. The abundant life which Jesus offers includes among much else freedom, truth, and love. Who does not want to be freed from the bondage of self? "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (8:36). People today are crying for freedom allover the world. While this is not basically a religious cry in many cases, the whole person is always involved, and the abundant life involves the whole person as well. Religiously, freedom from self always involves the forgiveness of sins and newness of life, and this is a God-man relationship.

The superficiality and externalism of much modern life have led our generation to desire something real, genuine, and honest. With our Watergates, Abscams, and political deceit, there is a real quest today by sincere people for reality versus sham, for that which is reliable and valid as over against so much that is empty, selfish and meaningless. When Christ proclaimed that he was "the truth" (14:6), and whose "life was the light of men" (1:4), he answered this deep longing for reality. Truth for the Greeks was not understood primarily as the opposite of untruth, but rather as the opposite of unreality, not genuine. Thus Jesus could reveal himself as the "true light" (i.e. the real light), and the "true vine" (i.e. the real, not a sham vine.) Christ also gave the new commandment to "love one another." Today there is a persistent cry for genuine concern for others, the dispossessed, the poor, the maimed, and all unfortunates. John in his Gospel makes love normative for all Christian ethics. Love for John, as revealed in the teachings of Jesus he gives, means creative human response to need, a pragmatic understanding of love (pragmatic comes from the Greek verb prassein, meaning "to do"). Love is not an emotion, but a doing toward others. What then is the intention of the fourth Gospel? The evangelist is seen as a reinterpreter of the Jesus tradition which he knew in the early Church. He seemingly wrote his Gospel with at least some of the following intentions: 1) John wanted to interpret the Gospel story as he knew it against as widely appealing a background as he knew. Writing from Asia Minor (Ephesus most likely), he had to orientate the coming Church in universal and cosmopolitan terms. 2) Thus he focused the whole Gospel story on the person of Christ, to whom the believer must respond with a personal commitment of faith. 3) To show that Jesus Christ becomes meaningful and intelligible for the believer only in the light of his glorification (i.e. the crucifixion death and glorious resurrection), he shows that he is remembered and witnessed to by even those who have not seen him "in the flesh." 4) In his presentation he seeks to establish the primacy of the revealing word over even the "signs" as a challenge to faith, especially for the contemporaries of the Evangelist for whom the witnessing word must suffice. If the testimony of the Samaritan woman was adequate for her kinsmen in Sychar, the disciples' witness must be adequate for us. 5) The symbols John uses help the reader (and hearer) to know Jesus via the symbols of Jesus' preaching, but the symbol always points beyond itself to the reality of the revelation. 6) John shows finally the relationships among the Father, the Son, and the believers in terms of the dynamic and personal experience of love seen at work in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God's love is manifested especially in the passion and resurrection. So when John in 20:31 states that, "... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name", he applies this to the whole Gospel, and not only to the "signs" which he has used to illustrate the divinity of Christ. John says that believers become children of God by "receiving" the one whom he has sent (1:12 , believing=receiving). The expression "born of God" is a typically Johannine term, used frequently of believers also in the first Epistle. This indicates that John has deliberately described the new birth of believers in language that is also fitting for the Son of God. The key word, "believe", in John is a very comprehensive word and is

so close to "knowing" and "confessing" that the emphasis is often on the acknowledgment of what the revealor says and what can also be confessed in expressed formulas, or what we would today call a "confession of faith." But the content of these statements is always concerned with the person of Christ, so that one could term it briefly a "Christological faith in the form of a confession", not, however, in a theoretical, doctrinal sense, but rather to emphasize its link with the person of God's messenger, as the phrase is most often used.[73] Once when a particular seeker asked Jesus, "What do we do to do the will of God?", Jesus answered them by saying, "This is the will of God that you believe in the one that He (i.e. God) has sent" (6:28-29). So doing God's will is basically believing in the one God sent! There are two exceptionally helpful discussions of the value of John's Gospel for our day. One is by A.M. Hunter in his work, According to John, and the second is a discussion by Stephen S. Smalley in his book John Evangelist and Interpreter. [74] Let us first summarize Smalley's 6-page discussion of this subject in a few paragraphs, and then give an epitome of Hunter's treatment. Both should be helpful as we see the value and place of John's Gospel in the present-day Church. Smalley begins by showing that in the early Church, John's Gospel was used by both heretics and the orthodoxists, and apparently it could be understood in contradictory ways. For example, the Alexandrian Gnostics, Basilides and Valentinus, used John in the interests of the Gnostic heresy. Others like Irenaeus used it to defend orthodoxy. John's Gospel was, indeed, a "natural battleground" for both sides, since it appears at one and the same time to have favored those who wished to support a gnostic or a non-gnostic position. This ambivalence within John explains why the early Church hesitated for some time before recognizing full the authenticity and apostolic authority of such a document. This Gospel could be used in apparently contradictory ways, and in support of conclusions which seem to be mutually exclusive to us, precisely because of its diversity, especially in its presentation of the person of Christ. Hermeneutics (interpretation) was no less a problem then than it is now in using the Biblical revelation as a foundation of theology. But actually John has an unusual balance in christology, with emphasis on both the divine and the human natures of Christ. He avoided both the "docetic" and the "adoptionist" heresies. By holding together the pre-existence and the real manhood of Jesus, John was deliberately providing the materials from which traditional Christianity could be fashioned, both in the early Church, as well as right down to our own day. He did not present a "docetic" Christ (from the Greek verb dokeo = to appear, to seem). Docetism is a preoccupation with the person of Jesus as exalted, but not incarnate in a true sense; as wholly divine but only "appearing" to be human. But neither did he allow an "adoptionist" Christ, which viewed Jesus as a man of blameless life who became the "adopted" son of God. A great deal of modern christology is based on this way of looking at Christ, for it emphasizes his true humanity which is somehow "raised up" through adoption by God. But John kept the early Church from going in either direction completely. Especially in the early christological controversies, it came to be clearly appreciated and understood that this balance between the divine and the human natures of Christ was preserved carefully in the fourth Gospel. It still has great

value for us today because of the christological balance. Smalley points this out in three summaric statements: 1) The fourth Gospel insists on the divine nature of Christ. It was the eternal Logos which became incarnate. But this incarnate Jesus was not just God; he is through a real incarnation also one with man. 2) Conversely, it is equally true that the fourth evangelist did not see Jesus as just a man, not even a man "adopted" by God to serve his purpose. While true man, he is yet true God. Nothing in John allows us to conclude that Jesus is other than the Word made flesh. He is one with man, and shares fully the human condition; but at the same time he is one with God. Here we see again the balance of the fourth Gospel, between "docetism" on the one hand, and "adoptionism" on the other. 3) Therefore, John points the way forward to a resolution of the tensions within today's Church over christology. Ever since the first century there has been the tendency to emphasize the humanity of Jesus to the exclusion of the divinity, or the reverse. This is to say that if Jesus were really God he could not also have been really man, and vice versa. The Chalcedonian Definition is the high point of christological debate in the early Church. It attempted to resolve the difficulty of maintaining that in one person there were two distinct natures; to this understanding the fourth Gospel pointed forward and contributed very largely. However, we have to agree that Chalcedon was a statement of the early Church, but not really a solution. It did preserve the balance, as John had done in his Gospel, but it does not show how the human and the divine are related in Jesus, but balances these two truths side by side. This is about as far as we finite humans can go in this deep theological matter. To shift to a summary of A.M. Hunter's discussion [75] as to the popularity and practicality of the fourth Gospel in our own time, he gives three reasons why this Gospel, in spite of all the changes wrought by the passage of nineteen centuries, continues to "speak to the condition' of so many Christians, high and humble, learned and unlearned. 1) First, Hunter says, it is the Gospel of Life. People everywhere in all ages have cried for life! In this Gospel, salvation is Life! Life is what the Gospel offers the believer in Christ (3:16). As we earlier noted, "life" is used 19 times in John and "eternal life" is used 17 times. The two terms are used interchangeably, and are synonymous. The typically synoptic term, "Kingdom of God", becomes "Life" in the fourth Gospel. It is defined only once (17:3): "This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." 2) A second key to the enduring worth of the fourth Gospel is that it depicts the person and work of Christ in depth, as nowhere else in the New Testament. The "signs" John uses point to the person of Jesus. The signs are not ends in themselves, as in the synoptic Gospels, but are the means of revealing the identity of the divine Son of God. 3) The third secret of the continuing relevance of John's Gospel says Hunter, is that it presents the challenge bf Jesus to men existentially. This becomes a rather philosophical discussion, but we can simply say that "existentialism" holds the individual and his place in the scheme of things of supreme importance, and the stress falls on concern and commitment. To think existentially is to think not as a spectator of the ultimate issues of life and death, but rather as one committed to a decision on them; it is existentialist teaching that knowledge of God and his truth becomes our only in the act

of deciding for it with "all that is in us." Soren Kierkegaard, the Dane, popularized the concept. But only the word is modern, for the Bible is full of it. The synoptic Gospels speak of the "two ways", and the need to struggle into the Kingdom. It calls people to choose between God and mammon. For John, judgment is not so much a great final court scene, as it is a present process and sifting. "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe in him is condemned already (3:8). John's concept of faith is also significant. In 1:12, "to receive" and "to believe" are synonymous. "True belief is to turn away from the world and accept the life that Jesus gives and is," says Rudolf Bultmann. Consequently, the fourth Gospel is the most individualistic of the New Testament documents, as C.F.D. Maule points out.[76] (4) There is no wonder then that this Gospel is so popular for those engaged in mission work and evangelism, and for pastors in their personal work within the congregation. The simple illustrations, the practical symbols from everyday life, and the strong but simple vocabulary all make this speak to people needs where they are. The fourth Gospel can no longer be considered in isolation from the other three Gospels. We must today take all four Gospels together, and John may contribute to the historical as well as to the theological understanding of Jesus. The words of Jesus recorded in the fourth Gospel are of continuing value for the Church. We need John in the New Testament to help us understand the other Gospels, and we need the other Gospels to help us understand and appreciate John's Gospel.

Notes

[73]CL R. Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John Vo1. I, Excursus on "The Notion of Faith in the 4th Gospel, pp. 558f.

[74]Stephen S. Smalley, John: Evangelist and Interpreter, pp. 246-252.

[75]A.M. Hunter, According to John.

[76]Cf. C.F.D. Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel", NOVUM TESTAMENTUM, Vol. 5 (1962), pp. 171-90.

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