JOHN VIII. 21-30.

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

25 Then said they unto Him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please him.

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

THIS passage contains deep things, so deep that we have no line to fathom them. As we read it we should call to mind the Psalmist’s words: “Thy thoughts are very deep.” (Psalm xcii. 5.) But it also contains, in the opening verses, some things which are clear, plain, and unmistakable. To these let us give our attention, and root them firmly in our hearts.

We learn, for one thing, that it is possible to seek Christ in vain. Our Lord says to the unbelieving Jews, “Ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins.” He meant, by these words, that the Jews would one day seek Him in vain.

The lesson before us is a very painful one. That such a Saviour as the Lord Jesus, so full of love, so willing to save, should ever be sought “in vain,” is a sorrowful thought. Yet so it is! A man may have many religious feelings about Christ, without any saving religion. Sickness, sudden affliction, the fear of death, the failure of usual sources of comfort,—all these causes may draw out of a man a good deal of “religiousness.” Under the immediate pressure of these he may say his prayers fervently, exhibit strong spiritual feelings, and profess for a season to “seek Christ,” and be a different man. And yet all this time his heart may never be touched at all? Take away the peculiar circumstances that affected him, and he may possibly return at once to his old ways. He sought Christ “in vain,” because he sought Him from false motives, and not with his whole heart.

Unhappily this is not all. There is such a thing as a settled habit of resisting light and knowledge, until we seek Christ “in vain.” Scripture and experience alike prove that men may reject God until God rejects them, and will not hear their prayer. They may go on stifling their convictions, quenching the light of conscience, fighting against their own better knowledge, until God is provoked to give them over, and let them alone. It is not for nothing that these words are written: “Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they
hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.” (Prov. i. 28, 29.) Such cases may not be common; but they are possible, and they are sometimes seen. Some ministers can testify that they have visited people on their death-beds who seem to seek Christ, and yet to seek in vain.

There is no safety but in seeking Christ while He may be found, and calling on Him while He is near,—seeking Him with a true heart, and calling on Him with an honest spirit. Such seeking, we may be very sure, is never in vain. It will never be recorded of such seekers, that they “died in their sins.” He that really comes to Christ shall never be “cast out.” The Lord has solemnly declared that “He hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth,”—and that “He delighteth in mercy.” (Ezekiel xviii. 32; Micah vii. 18.)

We learn, for another thing, how wide is the difference between Christ and the ungodly. Our Lord says to the unbelieving Jews, “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” These words, no doubt, have a special application to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In the highest and most literal sense there never was but One who could truly say, “I am from above: I am not of this world.” That One is He who came forth from the Father, and was before the world,—even the Son of God.

But there is a lower sense, in which these words are applicable to all Christ’s living members. Compared to the thoughtless multitude around them, they are “from above,” and “not of this world,” like their Master. The thoughts of the ungodly are about things beneath; the true Christian’s affections are set on things above. The ungodly man is full of this world; its cares and pleasures and profits absorb his whole attention. The true Christian, though in the world, is not of it; his citizenship is in heaven, and his best things are yet to come.

The true Christian will do well never to forget this line of demarcation. If he loves his soul, and desires to serve God, he must be content to find himself separated from many around him by a gulf that cannot be passed. He may not like to seem peculiar and unlike others; but it is the certain consequence of grace reigning within him. He may find it brings on him hatred, ridicule, and hard speeches; but it is the cup which his Master drank, and of which his Master forewarned all His disciples.—“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John xv. 19.) Then let the Christian never be ashamed to stand alone and show his colours. He must carry the cross if he would wear the crown. If he has within him a new principle “from above,” it must be seen.

We learn, lastly, how wilful is the end to which unbelief can bring men. Our Lord says to His enemies, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.”
These solemn words are invested with peculiar solemnity when we consider from whose lips they came. Who is this that speaks of men dying “in their sins,” unpardoned, unforgiven, unfit to meet God,—of men going into another world with all their sins upon them? He that says this is no other than the Saviour of mankind, who laid down His life for His sheep,—the loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate Friend of sinners. It is Christ Himself! Let this simple fact not be overlooked.

They are greatly mistaken who suppose that it is harsh and unkind to speak of hell and future punishment. How can such persons get over such language as that which is before us? How can they account for many a like expression which our Lord used, and specially for such passages as those in which He speaks of the “worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched”? (Mark ix. 46.) They cannot answer these questions. Misled by a false charity and a morbid amiability, they are condemning the plain teaching of Scripture, and are wise above that which is written.

Let us settle it in our minds, as one of the great foundation truths of our faith, that there is a hell. Just as we believe firmly that there is an eternal heaven for the godly, so let us believe firmly that there is an eternal hell for the wicked. Let us never suppose that there is any want of charity in speaking of hell. Let us rather maintain that it is the highest love to warn men plainly of danger, and to beseech them to “flee from the wrath to come.” It was Satan, the deceiver, murderer, and liar, who said to Eve in the beginning, “Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. iii. 4.) To shrink from telling men, that except they believe they will “die in their sins,” may please the devil, but surely it cannot please God.

Finally, let us never forget that unbelief is the special sin that ruins men’s souls. Had the Jews believed on our Lord, all manner of sin and blasphemy might have been forgiven them. But unbelief bars the door in mercy’s face, and cuts off hope. Let us watch and pray hard against it. Immorality slays its thousands, but unbelief its tens of thousands. One of the strongest sayings ever used by our Lord was this,—“He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.)

NOTES. JOHN VIII. 21-30.

21.—[Then said Jesus again unto them.] There seems a break or pause between this verse and the preceding one. It is as if our Lord resumed discourse with a new leading thought or key-note. The other idea, viz., that “again” refers to chap. vii. 34, and means that our Lord impressed on his hearers a second time that He would soon leave them, does not seem probable.—It seems not unlikely that in the first instance our Lord spoke of “going” to the officers of the priests and Pharisees, and that here He speaks to their masters, or at least to a different set of hearers.

[I go my way.] This must mean, “I am soon about to leave this world. My mission is drawing to a close. The time of my decease and sacrifice approaches, and I must depart,
and go back to my Father in heaven, from whence I came.”—The leading object of the sentence appears to be to excite in the minds of the Jews thought and inquiry about His divine nature. “I am one who came from heaven, and am going back to heaven. Ought you not to inquire seriously who I am?”

Chrysostom thinks our Lord said this, partly to shame and terrify the Jews, and partly to show them that His death would not be effected by their violence, but by His own voluntary submission.

[Ye shall seek Me...die in...sins.] This means that His hearers would seek Him too late, having discovered too late that He was the Messiah whom they ought to have received. But the door of mercy would then be shut. They would seek in vain, because they had not known the day of their visitation. And the result would be that many of them would die miserably “in their sins”—with their sins upon them unpardoned and unforgiven.

[Whither I go ye cannot come.] This must mean heaven, the everlasting abode of glory which the Son had with the Father before He came into the world, which He left for a season when He became incarnate, and to which He returned when He had finished the work of man’s redemption. To this a wicked man cannot come. Unbelief shuts him out. It is impossible in the nature of things that an unforgiven, unconverted, unbelieving man can go to heaven. The words in Greek are emphatic: “Ye cannot come.”

The notion of Augustine and others that “Ye shall seek Me” only means “Ye shall seek Me in order to kill Me, as ye are wishing to do now, but at last I shall be withdrawn from your reach,”—seems to me quite untenable. The “seeking,” to my mind, can only be the too late seeking of remorse.—The theory of some, that it refers exclusively to the time of the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, seems to me equally untenable. My belief is that from the time that our Lord left the world down to this day, the expression has been peculiarly true of the Jewish nation. They have been perpetually, in a sense, “seeking” and hungering after a Messiah, and yet unable to find Him, because they have not sought aright.—In saying this we must carefully remember that our Lord did not mean to say that any of His hearers were too sinful and bad to be forgiven. On the contrary, not a few of them that crucified Him found mercy on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached. (Acts ii. 22-41.) But our Lord did mean to say prophetically that the Jewish nation, as a nation, would be specially hardened and unbelieving, and that many of them, though an elect remnant might be saved, would “die in their sins.” In proof of this peculiar blindness and unbelief of the Jewish nation we should study Acts xxviii. 25-27, Romans xi. 7, and 1 Thes. ii. 15, 16. The Greek expression for “sins” in this verse confirms the view. It is not, literally rendered, “sins,” but “sin;” your special sin of unbelief.

Let us note that it is possible to seek Christ too late, or from a wrong motive, and so to seek Him in vain. This is a very important principle of Scripture. True repentance, doubtless is never too late, but late repentance is seldom true. There is mercy to the uttermost in Christ; but if men wilfully reject Him, turn away from Him, and put off seeking Him in earnest, there is such a thing as “seeking Christ” in vain. Such passages as Proverbs i. 24-32; Matt. xxv. 11-12; Luke xiii. 24-27; Heb. vi. 4-8, and x. 26-31, ought to be carefully studied.

Let us note that our Lord teaches plainly that it is possible for men to “die in their sins,” and never come to the heaven where He has gone. This is flatly contrary to the doctrine taught by some in the present day, that there is no hell, and no future punishment, and that all will finally go to heaven.

It is worthy of remark that our Lord’s words, “Ye shall seek Me,” and “Whither I go ye cannot come,” are used three times in this Gospel:—twice to the unbelieving Jews, here and at vii. 34, and once to the disciples, xiii. 33. But the careful reader will observe that in the
two first instances the expression is coupled with, “Ye shall not find Me,” and “Ye shall die in your sins.” In the last, it evidently means the temporary separation between Christ and His disciples which would be caused by His ascension.

Melancthon observes that nothing seems to bring on men such dreadful guilt and punishment as neglect of the Gospel. The Jews had Christ among them and would not believe, and so when afterward they sought they could not find.

Rollock observes that the “seeking” which our Lord here foretells was like that of Esau, when he sought too late for the lost birthright.

Burkitt observes. “Better a thousand times to die in a ditch than to die in our sins! They that die in their sins shall rise in their sins, and stand before Christ in their sins. Such as lie down in sin in the grave shall have sin lie down with them in hell to all eternity. The sins of believers go to the grave before them; sin dieth while they live. The sins of unbelievers go to the grave with them.”

22. — [Then said the Jews, etc.] It is plain that this last saying of our Lord perplexed His enemies. It evidently implied something which they did not understand. In the preceding chapter (vii. 34) they began speculating whether it meant that our Lord was going forth into the world to teach the Gentiles. Here they start another conjecture, and begin to suspect that our Lord must mean His going into another world by death. But by what death did He think of going! Did He mean to “kill Himself”? It seems strange that they should start such an idea. But may it not be that their minds were occupied with their own plan of putting Him to death? “Will He really anticipate our plan, by committing suicide, and thus escape our hands?”

Origen suggests that the Jews had a tradition about the manner in which Messiah would die: viz. “that He would have power to depart at His own time, and in a way of His own choosing.”

Rupertus observes that afterwards at the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, many of the desperate Jews did the very thing they here said of our Lord,—they killed themselves in madness of despair.

Melancthon remarks that nothing seems to anger wicked men so much as to be told they cannot come where Christ is.

23. — [And He said Ye are from beneath, etc.] Our Lord’s argument in this case appears to be as follows. “There is no union, harmony, or fellowship between you and Me. Your minds are entirely absorbed and buried in earth and objects of a mere earthly kind. You are from beneath, and of this world; while I came from heaven, and my heart is full of the things of heaven and my Father’s business. No wonder, therefore, that I said you cannot come where I go, and will die in your sins. Unless your hearts are changed, and you learn to be of one mind with Me, you are totally unmeet for heaven, and must at last die in your sins.”

The expressions “from beneath” and “from above” are strong figurative phrases, intended to put in contrast earth and heaven. See Col. iii. 1, 2. The Greek phrases literally rendered would be, “Ye are from the things beneath: I am from the things above.”

The expression “of this world” means bound up with, and inseparably connected, by tastes, aims, and affections, with this world, and nothing else but this world. It is the character of one utterly dead and graceless, who looks at nothing but the world, and lives for it. It is a character utterly at variance with that of our Lord, who was eminently “not of this world;” and therefore those who were of this character were incapable of union and friendship with Him.”

Let it be noted that what our Lord says of Himself here, is the very same thing that is said of his true disciples elsewhere. If a man has grace he is “not of the world.” (See John
xv. 19; xvii. 16; and 1 John iv. 5.) Christ’s living members always have more or less of their Master’s likeness in this respect. They are always more or less separated from and distinct from this world. He that is thoroughly worldly has the plainest mark of not being a member of Christ and a true Christian.

Theophylact observes that the strange notion of the Apollinarian heretics, that our Lord’s body was not a real human body, but came down from heaven, was built on this verse for one of its reasons. But, as he remarks, they might as well say the Apostles had not common human bodies, since the same thing is said of them: “not of this world.”

24.—[I said therefore, etc.] This verse seems elliptical, and must be filled up in some such manner as this: “It is because you are thoroughly earthly and of this world, that I said, Ye cannot come where I go. You are not heavenly minded, and cannot go to heaven, but must go to your own place. The end will be that you will die in your sins. Not believing in Me as the Messiah, you cut yourselves off from all hope, and must die in your sins. This, in short, is the root of all your misery,—your unbelief.”

Let it be noted that unbelief is the thing that specially ruins men. All manner of sin may be forgiven. But unbelief bars the door against mercy. (Mark xvi. 16, and John iii. 36.)

Let it be noted that unbelief was the secret of the Jews being so thoroughly “of the world.” If they would only have believed in Christ, they would have been “delivered from this present evil world.” The victory that overcomes the world is faith. Once believing on a heavenly Saviour a man has a portion and a heart in heaven. (Gal. i. 4; 1 John v. 4, 5.)

Let it be noted that there is nothing hard or uncharitable in warning men plainly of the consequences of unbelief. Never to speak of hell is not acting as Christ did.

The expression “Believe not that I am He” would be more literally rendered “Believe not that I am.” Hence some think that our Lord refers to the great name, well known to the Jews, under which God revealed Himself to Israel in Egypt: “Say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent you.” (Ex. iii. 14.)

Augustine remarks that “the whole unhappiness of the Jews was not that they had sin, but to die in sins.” He also observes, “In these words, Except ye believe that I am,” Jesus meant nothing short of this, ‘Except ye believe that I am God, ye shall die in your sins.’ It is well for us, thank God, that He said except ye believe and not except ye understand.”

Quesnel remarks, “It is a mistaken prudence to hide these dreadful truths from sinners, for fear of casting them into despair by the force of God’s judgments. We ought, on the contrary, to force them, by the sight of danger, to throw themselves into the arms of Christ, the only refuge for sinners.”

[Then said they...Who art Thou?] This question cannot have been an honest inquiry about our Lord’s nature and origin. Our Lord had spoken so often of His Father,—for instance, in the fifth chapter, when before the Council,—that the Jews of Jerusalem must have known well enough who and what He claimed to be. It is far more likely that they hoped to elicit from Him some fresh declaration which they could lay hold of, and make the ground of an accusation. Anger and malice seem at the bottom of the question: “Who art Thou that sayest such things of us? Who art Thou that undertakest to pronounce such condemnation on us?”

Ecolampadius thinks the question was asked sarcastically, “Who art thou, indeed, to talk in this way?”

[And Jesus saith...even the same...beginning ] Our Lord’s reply here seems so guarded and cautious, that it increases the probability of the Jews’ question being put with a malicious intention. He knew their thoughts and designs, and answered them by reminding them what He had always said of Himself: “Why ask Me who I am? You know well what I have
always said of myself. I am the same that I said to you from the beginning. I have nothing new to say.”

Scott thinks it simply means, “I am the same that I told you at the beginning of this discourse,—the Light of the World.”

There is an undeniable difficulty and obscurity about the sentence before us, and it has consequently received three different interpretations. The difficulty arises chiefly from the word “beginning.”

(a) Some think, as our own English version, Chrysostom, Calvin, Bucer, Gualter, Cartwright, Rollock, and Lightfoot, that “beginning” means the beginning of our Lord’s ministry. “I am the same person that I told you I was from the very first beginning of my ministry among you.” This view is confirmed by the Septuagint rendering of Gen. xliii. 18, 20.

(b) Some think, as Theophylact, Melancthon, Aretus, and Musculus, that “beginning” is an adverb, and means simply, “as an opening or beginning statement.” “First of all, as a commencement of my reply, I tell you that I am what I always said I was.”

(c) Some think, as Augustine, Rupertus, Toletus, Ferus, Jansenius, Lampe, and Wordsworth, that “beginning” is a substantive, and means the Beginning of all things, the personal Beginning, like “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the end.” (Rev. i. 8; xxi. 6: xxi. 13.) It would then mean, “I am the great beginning of all things, the eternal God, as I always said.”

The reader must exercise his own judgment on these three views. The extreme brevity and conciseness of the Greek words make it very hard to give a decided opinion upon them. On the whole, I prefer the view taken by our translators. In three other places in St. John’s Gospel our Lord speaks of His early ministry as “the beginning.” (John vi. 64; xv. 27; xvi. 4.) In no place in St. John’s Gospel does He ever call Himself “the beginning.” As to the second view, that it only means, “First of all, as an opening statement,” it seems to me so meagre, flat and bald, that I cannot think it is correct.

Rollock, who takes the view of our English version, observes what a bright example our Lord here sets to all Christians, and especially to ministers, of always telling the same story, and witnessing one and the same confession without variation.

26.—[I have many things, etc.] This verse again is very elliptical. The meaning seems to be as follows: “You marvel and are angry at my saying that you are from beneath, and will die in your sin, and cannot come where I go. You ask who I am that speak and judge in this manner. But I tell you that I have many other things that I might say, and other judgments that I might pronounce about you. But I forbear now. Yet I tell you that He who sent Me is the one true God; and I only speak to the world things which I have heard of Him, and am commissioned by Him to proclaim. He that sent Me will prove them to be true one day.”

The general idea seems to be that our Lord defends His right to speak decidedly and pronounce judgment on His enemies’ conduct, on the ground of His divine mission. “I have a right to say what I have said; and I might say much more, because I am not a common prophet, but am commissioned and sent as the Word of the Father.”

The frequency with which our Lord speaks of Himself as “sent by the Father,” in St John’s Gospel, should be carefully noticed.

When our Lord speaks of Himself as “hearing” things from the Father, we must remember that His language is accommodated to our understanding. The relation between the Father and the Son in the Trinity is something too mysterious for us fully to comprehend. The Son does not really and literally need the Father to “speak” to Him, and does not himself need to “hear” Him. The first and second Persons in the Trinity are ineffably united, though
two distinct Persons.

Lightfoot thinks the latter part of this verse means, “He that sent Me hath of old said and judged of you, and He is true, and they are true things that He said. Of this kind are the passages Isaiah xi. 10, and xxix. 10, and from such predictions Christ concludes thus, ‘Ye shall die in your sins.’”

27.—[They understood not, etc.] Why the Jews who heard these words did not comprehend that our Lord spoke of the “Father” is not clear. They must have thought that “He that sent Me” meant some earthly sender. The extent to which our Lord’s hearers sometimes understood Him, as in John v. 18, and sometimes did not understand Him, as here, is a curious subject.

Alford observes, “There is no accounting for the ignorance of unbelief; as any minister of Christ knows by painful experience.”

28.—[Then said Jesus, etc.] This verse is prophetical. Our Lord predicts that after His crucifixion the Jews would know that He was the Messiah, that He had done all He had done not of His own private authority but by God’s commission, and that He had spoken to the world only such things as the Father had taught and appointed Him to speak. But whether our Lord meant that His hearers would really believe with the heart and really confess His Messiahship, or that they would know it too late and be convinced when the day of grace was past and gone, is a nice and difficult question.

My own opinion, judging from the context and the analogy of other places, is in favour of the latter view; viz., that our Lord predicted the Jewish nation would know the truth and discover their own mistake too late. I think so because our Lord seems so frequently to allude to the light which would come on the minds of the Jewish nation at large after His death. They would be convinced though not converted.

Chrysostom thinks that our Lord meant, “Do you expect that you shall certainly rid yourselves of Me, and slay Me? I tell you that then ye shall most surely know that I am, by reason of the miracle of my resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem. When ye have been driven away from your place of worship, and it is not even allowed you to serve God as hitherto, then ye shall know that He doth this to avenge Me, and because He is wroth with those who would not hear Me “

Augustine takes the other side, and says, “Without doubt Jesus saw there some whom He knew, whom in His foreknowledge He had elected together with His other saints before the foundation of the world, that after His passion they should believe.”

Euthymius, agreeing with Chrysostom, remarks how the crowds that saw our Lord crucified, and returned home smiting their breasts,—the centurion who superintended His crucifixion,—the chief priests who tried in vain to stifle the report of His resurrection,—and Josephus the historian, who attributed the misfortunes of the nation to their murder of Christ,—were all witnesses to the truth of this verse. When too late they knew who our Lord was.

Alford thinks that the words admit of a double fulfilment, and that the Jews were to “know” that Jesus was the Christ, in two different ways. Some would know by being converted, some by being punished and judged.

The expression “lifted up,” both here and elsewhere in St. John’s Gospel, can mean nothing but our Lord’s crucifixion and lifting up on the cross. (John iii. 14, and xii. 32.) It is never used in any other sense, and the modern habit of talking of Christ as “lifted up,” when magnified and exalted in the pulpit, is a total misapprehension, and a play upon words.

Rollock and others think that the phrase “lifted up” may fairly include all the consequences and effects of our Lord’s crucifixion, such as His second advent to judge the
world, and that this will be the time when the unbelieving will at last know and be convinced that Christ is Lord of all. But the idea seems far-fetched.

The expression “then ye shall know” may possibly refer both to our Lord’s resurrection as well as His crucifixion. Certainly the rising again from the dead silenced our Lord’s enemies in a way that nothing else ever did.

The expression “that I am He,” here as elsewhere, might be equally well rendered “that I am” that I am the great “I AM,” the Messiah.

The phrase “that I do nothing of myself” is the same that we have had frequently before, as in John v. 19, 30. It means “that I do nothing of my own independent authority.” The reference is to the perfect union between the Son and the Father.

The expression, “as my Father hath taught Me I speak these things,” again bears special reference to the divine commission of our Lord and the perfect union between Himself and His Father. “I do not speak the things I speak of myself and by my own authority only. I speak nothing but what my Father has taught, commissioned, and appointed Me to speak.” (Compare 7th, 16th, and 26th verses of this chapter.)

Augustine says here, “Do not as it were represent to yourselves two men, the one father, the other son, and the father speaking to the son, as thou doest when thou sayest certain words to thy son, advising and instructing him how to speak, that whatever he has heard from thee he may commit to memory, and having committed to memory utter also with the tongue. Do not so conceive. Stature and motion of the body, the office of the tongue, distinction of sounds, do not go about to conceive them in the Trinity.” Again: “Incorporeally the Father spake to the Son, because incorporeally the Father begat the Son. And He taught him not as if He had begotten Him ignorant and in need of teaching; but this ‘taught’ is the same as begat Him knowing.”

29.—[And He that sent Me, etc.] This verse contains once more that deep and oft-repeated truth, the entire unity between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the consequent entire and complete harmony between the mind of the Father and the mind of the Son. It contains moreover that entire and complete performance of the Father’s will by the Son, and that perfect righteousness, obedience, and holiness, wherewith the Father is well-pleased.

When we read such words as “He that sent Me is with Me,” and “hath not left Me alone,” we must remember that there is much in them which we cannot fully explain. We must be content to believe that the Father was “with” the Son, and never “left” Him during the whole period of His incarnation, in an ineffable and inscrutable manner. Perhaps also there is a reference to Is. 1. 7, 8, 9.

Augustine remarks, “Albeit both are together, yet one was sent, and the other did send. The Father sent the Son, yet quitted not the Son.”

When we read such words as “I do always those things that please Him,” we must see in the expression a description of that spotless perfection with which the Son during His incarnation constantly pleased the eternal Father.

Let Christians never forget the practical lesson that in this verse, as in many other places, Christ is their example and their encouragement. Like Him, however short they may come, let them aim at “always doing what pleases God.” Like Him, let them be sure that so doing they will find the Father “with them,” and will never be left quite “alone.”

Calvin remarks, “This is the courage with which we ought to be animated in the present day, that we may not give way on account of the small number of believers: for though the whole world be opposed to His doctrine, still we are not alone. Hence it is evident how foolish is the boasting of the Papists, who while they neglect God, proudly boast of their
vast numbers.”

30.—[As He spake these words, many believed on Him.] There can be little doubt that “these words” in this place, refer to the whole discourse which was delivered at this time, and not to the single verse which immediately precedes this one. It is possible that the reference to Isa. 1. 7, 8, 9, may have brought light to the Jews’ minds, and explained our Lord’s relation to the Father and His claim to be received as the Messiah.—Otherwise it is not very clear what it was that made “many believe” on Him at this juncture. There is, however, no reason to think that the “belief” here was anything more than a head belief that our Lord was the Messiah. That many did so believe whose hearts remained unchanged, there can be little doubt. The same expression occurs at x. 42, and xi. 45, and xii. 42. The extent to which men may be intellectually convinced of the truth of religion and know their duty, while their hearts are unrenewed and they continue in sin, is one of the most painful phenomena in the history of human nature. Let us never be content with believing things to be true, without a personal laying hold on the living Person, Christ Jesus, and actually following Him.

Chrysostom observes “They believed, yet not as they ought, but carelessly and by chance, being pleased and refreshed by the humility of the words. For that they had not perfect faith the Evangelist shows by their speeches after this, in which they insult Him again. Theophylact, Zwingle, and Calvin take the same view.