

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRIVATE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST (PART III)

John 17:1-26

THOMAS MANTON preached that: “The Holy Spirit seems to have put a mark of respect upon this prayer above other prayers which Christ conceived in the days of His flesh. Elsewhere the Scripture tells us that Christ prayed; but this is expressed at large. This was, as it were, His dying blaze. Natural motion is swifter and stronger in the end; so was Christ’s love hottest and strongest in the close of His life; and here you have the eruption and flame of it. He would now open to us the bottom of His heart, and give us a copy of His continual intercession.”¹ For this reason, J. C. Ryle declares that this chapter is “the most remarkable in the Bible. It stands alone and there is nothing like it.”² Similarly John Brown writes that this passage is, “without doubt, the most remarkable portion of the most remarkable book in the world.”³

A. Introduction.

1. The location of this prayer.

The setting of this prayer cannot be asserted with certainty. If the command of 14:31 was delayed, then as Alford suggests, obviously the upper room was the actual location of this discourse/prayer that closely relates to the preceding ministry in 15:1-16:33. This would mean that there is no account of Christ’s ministry in transit to the garden called Gethsemane. However it is more likely that, upon immediate departure according to 14:31, this exalted revelation took place at some location between the upper room and the crossing of the brook in the Kidron Valley. Westcott suggests the temple area where architectural symbolism stimulated the discourse imagery of 15:1-11. However we would suggest that, at least with 17:1-26, it was peripatetic prayer ministry, or as Ryle believes, “it was prayed in some quiet place outside the wall, before our Lord ‘crossed the brook Cedron.’”⁴

The Lord Jesus had earlier declared to Simon Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32), on account of the apostle being tested after the manner of Job (Job 1:6-2:10). But now there is made known the tenor of this effectual intercessory prayer, it being a profound wrestling before His Father’s throne in heaven, vs.1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25, that at the same time confronts Satan’s earthly domain, that is “the world,” vs. 6, 9, 11, 13-16, 18, 23, 25, and seeks to preserve those given to Him by His Father from “the evil *one*,” v. 15.

¹ Thomas Manton, *Works*, X, p. 109.

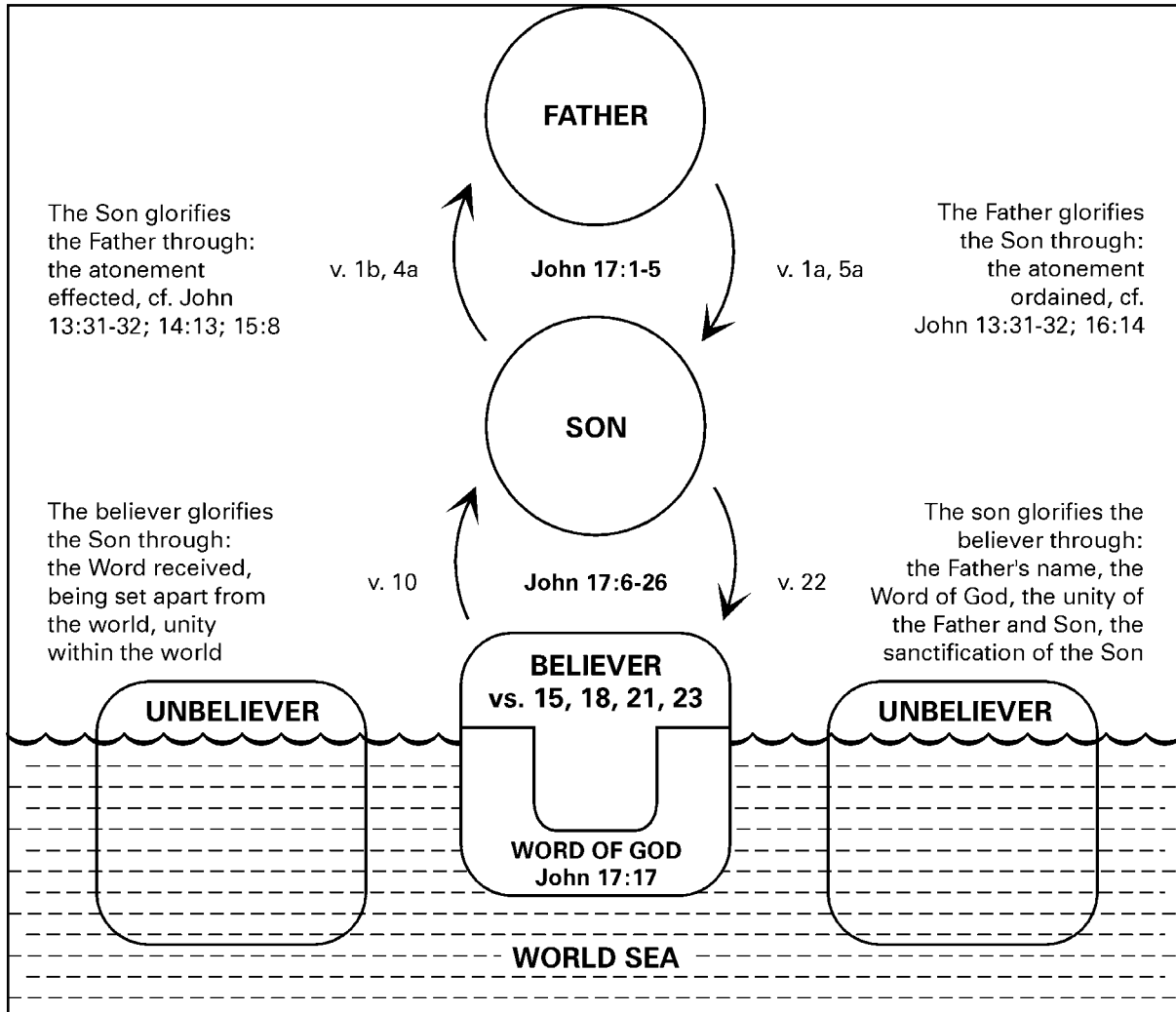
² J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, III, p. 192.

³ John Brown, *An Exposition of Our Lord’s Intercessory Prayer*, p. 1.

⁴ Ryle, *John*, III, p. 193.

2. The purposes of this prayer.

It is a complex of purposes that is cyclical as the following diagram illustrates. In other words, the Son prays that the Father might glorify Him so that He might glorify His Father. At the same time, the Son prays that the glory He has received from the Father might glorify the disciples given to Him. Consequently He also prays that the glorified disciples might glory Him, and in turn He might glorify His Father.



This prayer continues the glorification purpose and theme of John. To an unbelieving world, Jesus Christ declares His glory (2:11; 11:4; 12:27-28). To a believing upper room assembly Jesus expounds upon the glory of God with regard to triune relationships (13:31-32; 14:13; cf. 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4-5, 22, 24). Consider the synonymous use of “light” (3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46, cf. Isa. 9:1-2; 60:1-3), and “name” (17:6, 11-12, 26).

a. The meaning of “glory” and “glorification.”

- (1) In the Old Testament concerning “glory,” קָבוֹד, kabod, of which John’s Gospel is full of references and allusions, there is described the rich honor,

the impressive quality, the radiant holiness, the weighty reputation of God (Gen. 45:23 re Joseph; Exod. 24:15-17; Ps. 19:1; Isa. 43:7). To give God glory is to recognize and acknowledge what is so admirable and impressive in Himself, and especially in the spheres of His holiness and sovereignty.

- (2) In the New Testament concerning “glory,” δόξα, doxa, the meaning is essentially the same (Acts 7:55; I Cor. 10:31; II Cor. 4:17; Jude 25; Rev. 19:1), except that there is recognized the aspect of brilliant splendor, divine radiance, and especially in the divine person of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14, cf. Matt. 17:2; John 2:11; 8:12; 11:4; 12:41, cf. Isa. 6:1-10; John 14:13; 17:5).
- (3) To glorify the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is to recognize, and reflect by life and voice, the resplendent being of God to the exclusion of giving credit to any other source and especially man.
 - (a) By way of illustration, a girl announces to her parents that she has met the young man she longs to marry, and so fervently describes his every feature and strength. He is kind, handsome, strong, educated, refined, loyal, virtuous, a Christian, and has overall integrity. In other words, she glorifies her boyfriend.
 - (b) The capacity to glorify then, to a large extent, depends on one’s intimate knowledge of the person who is to be glorified. The more you know about God, the greater will be your capacity for glorifying, that is boasting, exalting in Him through worship and works that please Him (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 1:11).

b. The ultimate purpose in John 17.

Supremely, the Son prays that the Father might be glorified by means of His obedience to the redemptive plan of the Father, vs. 1b, 4; cf. 13:31. Thus Jesus Christ is preeminently patercentric/fathercentric (Matt. 5:16; 16:27; Mark 8:38).

c. The complementary purposes in John 17.

- (1) *Evangelism* unto faith that “Jesus is the Christ,” concerning those given to the Son by the Father, that is inseparable from subsequent sanctification, vs. 2, 6, 8, 18, 20-21, 26; cf. 20:31a.
- (2) *Sanctification* unto unity and union, concerning those given to Christ by the Father, who have believed in the Son and thus “have life in His name, vs. 8, 11-17, 19, 20-24, 26; cf. 20:31b.

c. The pattern purpose in John 17.

While the Lord’s Prayers of Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 have a common emphasis about them concerning the priority of God-centeredness, yet this glorification prayer has a more exalted pattern that is less obviously structured. It particularly elaborates upon what it really means to pray, “Our Father” or “My

Father,” cf. vs. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25. There is the believer’s heavenly perspective of union with the Father through the Son, after the pattern of the Son’s union with His Father, and the believer’s earthly perspective of union amongst the brethren, after the pattern of the Son’s union with the Father.

3. The Person of this prayer.

He is the eternal Son of God who, in a matter of hours, will provide the supreme manifestation of His glory on the cross (John 17:5, 24; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:9; I Pet. 1:21).

- a. He has the same essential nature as God; He is God (John 1:1). He has come from the bosom of His Father (John 1:18; 6:38) and now anticipates returning to that place of unclouded glory (John 17:4-5, 11, 13).
- b. He is the second person of the Trinity who has willingly taken upon Himself “the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:8; cf. John 13:1-11). In this servant role He now prays to His Father, yet He remains fully and essentially God (Col. 2:9).

B. Prayer for the glorification of the Father, through the glorification of the Son, vs. 1-5.

As with the Lord’s Prayers (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4), here verses 1-5 have an exclusive theocentric focus. The Son’s initial passion concerns the glorification of His Father on earth in a manner that replicates former glory experienced in the bosom of the Father in eternity past. Only after this acknowledgment is there complementary interest in “the men whom you gave Me out of the world,” v. 6.

1. The Father glorified through the Son’s dominion over all flesh, vs. 1-2.

Again, as with the Lord’s Prayers (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:1), this is also a teaching prayer, though in this instance, as earlier suggested, it may have been peripatetic in mode. The disciples were surely transfixed as their Master changed the direction of His address. Whereas in 13:1-16:33 Jesus privately speaks in the main to the disciples, now He speaks to His Father in their presence, and it is this new perspective that causes a profound change in manner and tone. Probably John was so indelibly impressed with what he heard that, through the Holy Spirit’s enabling, he had little difficulty in eventually making a record of this sublime laying bare of the Son of God’s distressed soul (12:27).

a. The hour of the Son’s glory over all flesh, vs. 1-2a

“Jesus having spoken these things, He also lifted up His eyes toward heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify [δοξάζω, doxazō] Your Son in order that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority [ἐξουσία, exousia] over all flesh/humanity.’” Jesus posture in prayer varied (Matt. 26:39; cf. Luke 18:13; Acts 7:55); probably he is in the open air. However it was noticeable that the direction of Jesus’ gaze changed from the disciples to the regions above. Here the motivation to prayer was the fact that “the hour has come.” Earlier in Jesus public ministry John has recorded that Jesus’ hour “has not yet come” (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). But now, during passion week, we read that “the hour has come for the

Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23, cf. 27; 13:1; 16:32). So Ryle well describes this climactic hour of glorification as follows:

I think the meaning of this sentence must be this: “Give glory to Thy Son, by carrying Him through the cross and the grave, to a triumphant completion of the work He came to do, and by placing Him at Thy right hand, and highly exalting Him above every name that is named. Do this, in order He may glorify Thee and Thy attributes. Do this, that He may bring fresh glory to Thy holiness, and justice, and mercy, and faithfulness, and prove to the world that Thou art a just God, a holy God, a merciful God, and a God that keepeth His word. My vicarious death and my resurrection will prove this, and bring glory to Thee. Finish the mighty work. Glorify Me, and in so doing glorify Thyself. Finish Thy work, not least, that Thy Son may glorify Thee by bringing many redeemed souls to heaven, to the glory of Thy grace.”⁵

Here Jesus prays proleptically with an imperative of desire or entreaty, whereby this imminent hour of glory is considered to be immediate, that is His death, burial and resurrection, and even His subsequent ascension, and session with the Father after forty days. This is also an imperative of desire or entreaty. The Son’s intent in the whole of His earthly ministry was to exhibit, through obedience, the glory of the Father (John 4:34; 14:13; Phil. 2:10-11). Thus everything that follows in this prayer falls under this governing principle, including Christ’s intercession for those who have been given by the Father to the Son for His saving and keeping.

Note that the accomplishment of this ultimate purpose of glorification was to be guaranteed by means of the Father having given to His Son, in eternity past, “authority over all flesh/humanity,” that is Jew and Gentile, so that the decreed plan of particular redemption might certainly be accomplished (Matt. 11:27; 28:18). Hence the Son is contemplating the near completion of that which He agreed to fulfill when abiding in the Father’s bosom.

While this overriding principle of glorification was such a passionate concern of the Son of God, and the Christian is to follow in the steps of his Master, yet today in so much of evangelical Christianity this priority is almost lost to sight. Sometimes confessional orthodoxy will recite this fundamental truth, but there is rarely any heartfelt fervency, as this prayer manifests. While dying of tuberculosis, David Brainerd exclaimed three weeks before he expired:

Near night, while I attempted to walk a little, my thoughts turned thus; “How infinitely sweet it is to love God, and be all for Him!” Upon which it was suggested to me, “You are not an angel, not lively and active.” To which my soul immediately replied, “I as sincerely desire to love and glorify God, as any angel in heaven.” Upon which it was suggested again, “But you are filthy, not fit for heaven.” Hereupon instantly appeared the blessed robes of Christ’s *righteousness*, which I could not but exalt and triumph in; and I viewed the infinite excellency of God, and my soul even broke with longings that God should be *glorified*. I thought of dignity in heaven; but instantly the thought returned, “I do not go to heaven to get honor, but to give all possible glory and praise” Oh, how I longed that God should be glorified on *earth* also!⁶

⁵ Ibid., p. 195.

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 383.

b. The bestowal of the Son's glory through eternal life, v. 2b.

“Just as/so that [καθώς, kathōs] all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.” At this juncture, to Arminians there might be given the advice: “Abandon hope, all who enter here!” I recall in a biography of A. W. Tozer it being related that in his studying of John 17 he gave up any possible thought of a genuine Christian loosing his salvation. Surely the reason is the repeated and emphatic stress that is placed here upon the awesome truth concerning the sovereignty of God's particular elective grace, in eternity past (vs. 6, 9, 24). Here we are led to the borders of the secret will of God (Deut. 29:29), as previously revealed (6:37, 39), beyond which even Calvinists should not stray, especially by means of logical extension. Thus individual conversion is rooted in the will and forelove of the Father (Rom. 8:29) to which His Son obediently ascends, and not merely autonomous human faith. This is not to deny the significant biblical role of faith, vs. 8, 20-21, but rather understand it as divinely enabled linkage to Christ, the effectual Mediator of His Father's will. However this saving purpose is not merely elective, but as has been repeatedly emphasized, the impartation of “eternal life” (3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; I John 1:2; 2:25; 5:11, 13, 20), that is participation in “the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4), concerning those captive to death in body, soul, and spirit (John 5:24; 8:51-2; I John 3:14). But further, since this eternal life is divinely donated by Christ (10:27-28), like original natural life (Acts 17:28), it is the gift of pure grace (Rom. 6:23, χάρισμα, charisma).

2. The Father known through the Son's heaven-sent commission, v. 3.

“And this is eternal life in order that they may know You, the only [μόνος, monos] true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Here is a fundamental definition of “eternal life,” it being more a profound dynamic relationship with God rather than life that is forever linear. It is, when rightly understood, the knowledge of God. So J. I. Packer challenges:

What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the “eternal life” that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me” (Jer. 9:23f.). What, of all the states God ever sees in man, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of Himself. “I desire . . . the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Says God (Hos. 6:6).⁷

Of course the amplification of this eternal life makes this knowledge of God to be a matter that challenges spiritual imagination. So Thomas Manton comments:

It is life eternal; not like the earthly life, which is but as a vapor, a little warm breath, or warm smoke, turned in and out by the nostrils. Our present life is a lamp that may be soon quenched; it is in the power of every ruffian and assassinate. But this is life eternal. In heaven there is a fair estate; the tenure is for life; but we need not take thought for

⁷ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 33.

heirs; we and our happiness shall always live together. The blossoms of paradise are for ever fresh and green: therefore if we love life, why should we not love heaven? This is a life that is never spent, and we are never weary of living. This life is short, yet we soon grow weary of it. The shortest life is long enough to be encumbered with a thousand miseries. If you live to old age, age is a burden to itself: “The days shall come in which they shall say, We have no pleasure” (Eccles. 12:1). Life itself may become a burden, but you will never wish for an end of eternal life; that is a long date of days without misery and without weariness. Eternity is every day more lovely. Well might David say, “The loving-kindness of God is better than life” [Ps. 63:3]. Men have cursed the day of their birth, but never the day of their new birth. Those that have once tasted the sweet and benefit of God’s life never grow weary of it.⁸

Further note the exclusive, definitive qualification here. The God that John commends here is “the only true God” who undoubtedly is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). However the qualification goes further, for this “only God” (5:44) has an “only begotten/sole and unique Son” (1:14; 3:16, 18; I John 4:9) whom He has sent. Why this commission? So that the believer in Jesus Christ may truly see, and consequently know His Father (14:7, 9). Thus truly to know Jesus is truly to know His Father (5:23; 8:19).

3. The Father glorified on earth through the glory of the Son, vs. 4-5.

The proleptic manner continues,⁹ principally for the purpose of informing Jesus’ disciples, both present and future. The content here has been taught before at various points in Jesus’ earthly ministry, but this is a final thrust and compaction that here, according to the medium of prayer, impresses the heavenly mandate of the Father upon the auditors. A prayer tells us a lot about the person who is praying.

a. By means of the earthly work of the Son, v. 4.

“I glorified You on the earth having completed/finished [τελειόω, teleioō] the work which You have given Me to do.” Yet again the Son is supremely patercentric/fathercentric. His ministry up to the present has involved three key elements.

(1) Jesus’ commission at the Father’s bosom conference, v. 4c.

A specific warrant has been given by God the Father to God the Son, but when? The repeated language of Jesus being “sent” (5:24, 30, 36-38; 6:29, 38-39, 44, 57; 7:16, 18, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4, 7; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5) from His Father indicates eternity past in “the bosom of the Father” (1:18) when “the decree of the Lord . . . [to redeem] the nations” (Ps. 2:7-9) was promulgated, and the Son came forth “to do Your will, O God” (Heb. 10:7; cf. 1:2; John 4:34) with unqualified obedience (Phil. 2:5-8). This was Jesus’ supreme earthly passion.

⁸ Manton, *Works*, 10, p. 135.

⁹ One commentator, not worth mentioning, suggested that because Jesus here declares He *has* completed the work given to him by the Father, that is apparently before His actual crucifixion, then the saving work of Christ had indeed now been completed. Such foolishness is not worthy of a reply.

(2) Jesus' compliance with the Father's earthly commission, v. 4b.

Now Jesus confesses climactic fulfillment of His redemptive vocation, yet again proleptically. So on the cross Jesus will declare, "It is [has been] finished [τελέω, teleō]" (19:30). While the listening disciples are presently void of understanding, soon, following Jesus' ascension to His Father, they will recollect these details and, with the Holy Spirit's enabling, better appreciate this note of completion, and the model for following in His obedient steps. So Isaac Watts has written:

Such was Thy truth, and such Thy zeal,
Such deference to Thy Father's will,
Such love, and meekness so divine,
I would transcribe and make them mine.

(3) Jesus' completion for the Father's earthly glory. v. 4a.

The focus of Jesus' ministry was never glory for Himself as an end in itself (8:50, 54). He even sought more than strict compliance with His Father's will; rather His ultimate goal was the glorification, that is the holy justification and exaltation of His Father before a world of sin and woe (13:31; 14:13). Thus at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus declares a divine QED, an affirmation of total completion of that which had been commanded, spanning his years of preparation as well as approximately four years of public ministry. Now the spotless Lamb of God has come to that climax of redemption whereby the New Covenant was actually cut, to the shame of earth's spite and the glory of heaven's triumphant grace (Gen. 50:20).

b. By means of the heavenly glory of the Son, v. 5.

"And now You glorify Me, Father, with/alongside of Your own glory which I had in Your presence before the world existed." Still once more the thought is proleptic, presently anticipating imminent glory. Certainly the glory described in v. 4 encompasses the full redemptive work of Christ, including His ascension and session with His Father. Nevertheless here there is movement toward greater understanding of the Son's anticipation of that divine ecstasy which shall be His having returned to that place of supreme delight, His Father's bosom (1:18). Thus we have briefly unveiled the mystery of personal and subordinate distinctions within the triunity of the Godhead.

(1) Jesus' heavenly glory in eternity past, v. 5b.

The "time" here is eternity past prior to the creation of "all things" by "the Word [λόγος, logos]," the pre-existing Lord Jesus Christ (1:3, 10; 8:58). This intimate "face-to-face" relationship (1:1-2) between the Son and His Father is likened to a son fondly reclining upon the "bosom [κόλπος, kolpos]" of his father (1:18). Strongly intimated here is privileged access before a Father who smiles upon the devotion of His Son.

(2) Jesus' heavenly glory in eternity future, v. 5a.

In recollection of eternity past, the Son further prays, with an imperative of desire, concerning his imminent death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and especially His welcome session beside “the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3; cf. Ps. 110:1; Rom. 6:4; Heb. 10:12), that is His Father. This reunion anticipated “the joy set before Him . . . at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Hence the glorification which the Son desires, with no thought for the accolade of man, especially concerns His perfect completion of the work formerly assigned to Him, as confessed in v. 4.

C. Prayer for the glorification of the Son through the sanctification of believers, vs. 6-19.

In a manner similar with the Lord's Prayers where God's business has priority over man's business (Matt. 6:9-14; Luke 11:2-4), so here, vs. 1-5 having first focused on the relation of Christ with His Father, now vs. 6-26 focus on Christ's relationship with His disciples.

1. The Son's sanctification of believers given by the Father, vs. 6-12.

It is not difficult to appreciate that man has a world view which comes about by means of focusing through human lens. On the other hand it is difficult for this same human being, especially as a sinner, to focus with a divine perspective, that is to think God's thoughts and perceive with God's perception concerning this same human realm. Yet here Jesus Christ desires that His very earthy, human disciples should be transported heavenward so as to better understand the divine perspective concerning how God determines to save sinners.

a. Christ's revelation of the Father's name, vs. 6-8.

Here Jesus provides for His Father and auditors, in the form of prayer, a vocation update. Hence He commences to place considerable emphasis upon the revelatory character of “the name” of His Father, as in vs. 6, 11, 12, 26 (cf. Matt. 6:9; John 5:43; 10:25; 12:28; III John 7). Surely John's pervasive Hebrew orientation further enhances the emphatic nomenclature here. Consequently the distinctive meaning is undoubtedly that of, in Hebrew, “hashem,” the name, the unique, ineffable name of Jehovah or Yahweh, יהוה, the God of Israel's own personal name, and not the more generic Elohim or Adonai.

(1) It is revelation to the disciples given to the Son, v. 6.

“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You [initially] gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” Here is messianic prophetic fulfillment of Psalm 22:22; cf. Proverbs 18:10. But how has Jesus affectively accomplished this revelation of “the name,” this glorification of the Father upon earth, vs. 4, 26? Surely by means of the incarnation as a whole (1:1, 14, 18; Col. 2:9), but more specifically His “I-Am” identification (6:35; 8:12, 58; 9:5; 10:14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1) that obviously identified Him with the revelation given to Moses (Exod. 3:13-15; 6:2-8), as well as His words (10:30-31; 14:9), and His works (5:16-18, 36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11).

However, another aspect of Christ's revelation of His Father's name is by means of that very term "Father" which Jesus repeatedly employed, especially here in vs. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25. In other words, having come from the Father, the Son reveals Him as His Father (14:9; cf. 1:14; 3:35; 5:17, 19-23, 26, 36; 6:46, 57; 8:18-19, 54; 10:15, 30, 36-38; 12:49-50; 13:1, 3; 14:6-7, 9-13, 20, 31; 15:15; 16:15, 27-28, 32). Thus to truly know God as the "I-Am" Jehovah of the Old Testament is also to know Him as the Father of the New Testament through His only beloved Son.

The disciples present with Jesus are especially in mind at this juncture, though also consider v. 20. The reason is that the chain of sovereign dealing with them moves from the Father's initial elective possession to transference to the Son's saving keeping (6:44-45) with the result that "they have kept Your word." This keeping of the Father's word is not so much with regard to practical, obedient godly virtue as faithful confession that Jesus is the Son of God come from the Father, vs. 8, 25, cf. vs. 3, 18, 21, 23. Hence Jesus' prayer is a report of obedience that has resulted in initial personal redemptive success, that yet anticipates a much greater ingathering from and for the Father, v. 18, 21, 23.

- (2) It is revelation of the Son's reliance on His Father, v. 7.

"Now they have known that everything You have given Me is from You." Once again Jesus speaks proleptically (cf. vs. 1, 4-5). While believing that Jesus is the Son of God (16:30), yet up to this point the disciples have remained dull concerning their perception of the climax of Jesus' earthly ministry, and even the next few hours will see little improvement. But then will come, following Christ's ascension to His Father, a radical change at Pentecost (Luke 22:32; John 7:38-39) when new perception will result in more substantial understanding concerning the Son's relationship with His Father. From v. 8 we learn that "everything" here very much focuses upon the words of the Father which the disciples "now" comprehend; yet the truth of these words may also incorporate the revelation of the Father to the Son concerning "the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession" (Ps. 2:8) which the Father promises to lavish upon His Son. However the overriding emphasis is once again the patercentric appreciation of the Son being of related importance to true disciples of Christ who really grasp this truth.

- (3) It is revelation of the Father's words mediated via the Son, v. 8.

"Because the words [τὰ ῥήματα, ta rhēmata] which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received/welcomed [them] and have come to know truly that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me." Here is allusion to "bosom conversation" between the Father and His Son in eternity past, that is when the Son learned of His redemptive appointment. In simple terms, the words of God the Son are the very words of God the Father mediated to the disciples; thus red letter Bibles are of no importance. But what exactly was the meaning of these words, this instruction? John records that these "words" chiefly focused on who Jesus is in relation to His Father

in heaven, and especially His vocation designated by His Father in relation to the saving of those given to Him (3:31-35; 6:68; 8:28, 38; 12:48-49; 14:10). Here is the essence of Messiah's person and origin as the Lord's anointed; so the disciples have, in sequence, rightly "received/welcome" and "truly understood" and "believed," with considerable adjustment in the light of popular Jewish understanding, that Jesus is this same, heaven sent, divine Messiah (16:29-30).

b. Christ's mediation with the Father, vs. 9-10.

When a father gives a trust to his son for safe-keeping, the dutiful son will take his responsibility seriously, especially the maintenance and preservation of family tradition and assets. So Christ is jealously concerned about His inheritance of the elect from the Father that nevertheless retains heavenly ancestry.

(1) His concern for the chosen of the Father, v. 9.

"I ask [ἐρωτάω, erōtaō] concerning them; I do not ask concerning the world but concerning whom you have given Me, because they are Yours." Here is the discriminating, particular, eclectic love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd (10:3, 11, 14-16), the parameters of which have been established by His Father. In marriage a man covenants that, "forsaking all others," he gives a pledge of exclusive love. A man who declares his love for all woman is sure to have trouble with all women! Here, because of Jesus' singular devotion to His Father, He jealously intercedes for these precious souls that remain the possession of His Father, and His attitude here is one of confident expectation that He will be heard. But the world at large is not included here within the distinguishing love of Jesus, even though He came to the world he had made as its Savior (1:10, 29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 6:33; 12:47). Nevertheless,

[h]owever wide is the love of God (3:16, however salvific the stance of Jesus toward the world (12:47), there is a peculiar relationship of love, intimacy, disclosure, obedience, faith, dependence, joy, peace, eschatological blessing and fruitfulness that binds the disciples together and with the Godhead.¹⁰

So the world is not impressed here with this particularity of love. It becomes offended at this sovereignty of the grace of God, employed by Jesus, even though it does not hesitate to discriminate over the works of its own hands. But further, the world hates those Jesus has chosen on behalf of the Father (15:16, 18-20; 17:14). For this reason in particular He intercedes here for the safe keeping of His own (vs. 11, 15, 17).

(2) His concern for glorification by the chosen, v. 10.

"And all the things that are Mine are Yours and all the things that are Yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them." More simply, "All My things are Your things and all Your things are My things." Here the Father and the Son are in perfect reciprocal union. What are the "all things" here (cf. "every

¹⁰ D. A. Carson, *John*, p. 560.

thing” v. 2)? They are surely the disciples regarded as objects selected out of this world for the purpose of mutual possession by the Father and the Son (cf. 10:30), but not only the disciples; also included are “the nations” and “the very ends of the earth” (Psalm 2:8; cf. 22:27; John 16:14-15). Hence the point of focus here concerns not so much the individuality of each elect thing/person as their being equally possessed by the Father in heaven and the Son presently upon earth. So in this divine transaction, ordained by the Father and accomplished by the Son, the end result is exaltation and glorification of the Son, yet again, proleptically speaking. In other words, Christ is glorified by the chosen disciples as is the vine by means of its branches and fruit (15:5, 8-9).

c. Christ’s security in the Father’s name, v. 11-12.

The instructive intent of this prayer is further evident here, that is Christ’s desire for the disciples to be comforted by means of further details with regard to His intercessory concern, in view of His imminent departure. With the disciples being left behind in such a savage, devilish world, they need additional assurance that Christ will not abandon them as “orphans” (14:18). So here with paternal concern expressed in fervent prayer, He makes further preparation that calls for their ongoing divine “keeping,” “guarding,” and “sanctification” (vs. 11-12, 15, 17, 19).

(1) He asks the Father to keep the disciples, v. 11.

“And I am no longer in the world, and [yet] they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, in order that they may be one just as we [are one].” Once more, proleptically speaking, Christ anticipates His departure that would, on the surface, appear to leave the disciples alone. Without Him, like bleating lambs, they are defenseless before the devouring wolves of this Christ-hating world. Hence the earnestness of Christ’s plea is expressed by His reverent address of transcendence and imminence, “Holy Father.” It may be that in Jesus’ desire that the disciples be sanctified, that is kept holy in an unholy world (vs. 17, 19), He invokes the holiness of God the Father. However, while Christ has been “keeping them in Your name,” v. 12, up to this point, how is it possible for this “keeping” to be maintained following His departure? Surely the manifold answer is adoption by the Holy Spirit (14:18, 26; 16:26; 16:7, 12-14), the “truth [that is Your word]” (v. 17), and supremely Christ’s atonement sanctification: “I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in the truth,” v. 19, the result being a unity/oneness after the divine model of the unity/oneness that the Father and Son evidence. Here is essential divine unity with the diversity of the distinctive divine Persons that is to be the basis of Christian unit that yet manifests diversity in gifts and gender. This is more fully described in vs. 20-23.

- (2) He asserts He has kept the disciples, v. 12.

“While I was with them, I was keeping/preserving [τηρέω, tēreō] them in Your name which You have given Me, and I kept/guarded [φυλάσσω, phulassō] them, and none of them perished [ἀπόλλυμι, apollumi] except the son of perdition/destruction [ἀπώλεια, apōleia], in order that the Scripture [γραφὴ, graphē] might be fulfilled.” The Son is not backward in declaring His perfect faithfulness to the task appointed by His Father. However, the purpose in mind is the ongoing keeping of the eleven upon His departure. Now Christ more deliberately defines His betrayer (cf. 13:21-30). There is a sense in which Judas also has been kept temporarily in a social, nominal sense, but not savingly; hence while the eleven will be saved, Judas will ultimately perish in body and soul, as one who, while being addressed as a wonder-worker in Christ’s name, is told by that same Christ, “I never knew you [not ‘I once knew you but now I don’t’]; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23). His designation as “the son of perdition/destruction/damnation” is a description of his essential character; he is a child of the pit whose whole purpose is to recruit others to fulfill his satanic and antichrist designs! He may additionally be associated with “the man of lawlessness” who is similarly designated as “the son of destruction” (II Thess. 2:3). However the destiny of Judas may also be included here, that is his eventual consignment to hell with his master (Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8). Hence Judas was not savingly given to the Son by the Father (6:37; 17:2, 6, 9, 24), though he was chosen by Christ to participate for a while as a usurper (John 6:70-71). Such is the prophetic expectation of Scripture that will unfailingly come to pass (Ps. 41:9; John 13:18), concerning Satan’s worst than cannot thwart the ultimate triumph of heaven’s best (Gen. 50:20).

2. The Son’s sanctification of believers sent into the world, vs. 13-19.

With increasing pastoral concern, Christ fervently pleads for the eleven with an intensity of soul and spirit. His future hope is that the disciples experience divine “joy,” v. 13, “preservation,” v. 15, “sanctification,” vs. 17, 19, and a sense of “vocation,” v. 18, all within the environment of a hostile world.

- a. Sanctification by Christ’s joy, v. 13.

“But now I am coming to You, and I speak these things [by way of prayer] in the world in order that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” The anticipation by the Son of His return to the bosom of His Father is one of exquisite delight and unbounded joy, not withstanding commitment to His imminent “Via Dolorosa”. Here is a further indication of Jesus Christ’s didactic purpose at this time. He seems not to have earlier revealed such a degree of prayerful intimacy, enjoyed with His Father, as here. But now He prays “in the [arena of the] world,” that is more openly for the sake of His listening disciples. With regard to “the joy set before Him” (Heb. 12:2), He anticipates the time of redemptive fulfillment, ushered in by Jesus’ post-resurrection ascension and session, that is now shortly to occur. Then the disciples will obtain a fullness of understanding and joy concerning the atonement’s completion, through the Holy

Spirit's outpouring, that will parallel to a degree His anticipation of a triumphant reception by His appreciative and adoring Father.

b. Sanctification by the Father's Word, vs. 14-17.

While the disciples of Christ will be provided with inner joy, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, there will be outer conflict from a hateful world that is under the direction of Satan. What then will be the objective, instrumental means of their insulation from the world while being in the world and yet not isolated from it? The answer is the truth of the Father's word, vs. 6, 8, 14, 17, 19, mediated by the Son.

(1) It is revelation antithetical to the world, v. 14.

"I have given to them Your word [λόγος, *logos*]; and the world has hated [μισέω, *miseō*] them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." This is the objective, concrete, God-breathed (II Tim. 3:16) word revelation that the Father has spoken to His Son, v. 8, and the complementary Old Testament that has been mediated with christological enlightenment by the Christ. Thus, to the two Emmaus disciples, "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). Then, having been raised from the dead, Jesus also addressed His disciples: "'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:44-47; cf. Matt. 28:19-20). The disciples have already commenced witnessing about Jesus as the Christ (Matt. 10:5-15; Luke 9:1-6), very imperfectly at this stage, by means of biblical exposition that they have already received from their Master and confirming signs. As a result of this identification with Jesus, they have already been spurned (15:19), this being a prelude to more concerted rejection by the world at large, which is to follow.

(2) It is revelation opposed by the evil one, v. 15.

"I do not ask in order that You would take them out of the world, but in order that You would keep them from the evil [one]." If Jesus' sole concern was for the disciples, then their removal from the earth with Him would make sense; but He has a vision of necessary apostolic ministry of universal proportions (v. 18; Matt. 24:14) that will confront this exceedingly treacherous world. Hence this will require ongoing sanctification, that is shielding from Satanic assault and penetration (Matt. 6:13; I John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19) at a personal level. Notwithstanding Jesus' awareness that "all power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18), He is particularly sensitive to the reality that "the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (14:30; cf. 12:31; 16:11). Nevertheless, at the same time a world-wide gospel offensive is to be divinely accomplished in the midst

of this world of fearful darkness (Eph. 5:15-16), and for this reason the earthly sanctification of Jesus' disciples is a vital necessity, it being no minor task that human ingenuity can accomplish (10:11-12).

- (3) It is revelation that sanctifies from the world, v. 16.

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” By way of repetition, cf. v. 14, concerning exceeding abhorrence of “the evil one,” v. 15, and anticipation of a major imperative of entreaty, v. 17, for Jesus this present decadent, anti-Christ world is antithetical to His kingdom, and consequently His disciples. Here is profound pastoral concern. So Thomas Manton warns us that,

[w]e can never enough be cautioned against the world. . . . 1. Because of our proneness to it. . . . It is a great part of religion to ‘keep ourselves unspotted from the world’ (Jas. 1:27). 2. Because of the heinousness and danger of it. It is called adultery: ‘Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God’ (Jas. 4:4). 3. Because of the unsuitableness to the divine nature. ‘Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world’ (I John 5:4). . . . It is contrary to the aim of Christ; His whole aim in coming and going was to bring us to heaven (Heb. 11:16).¹¹

- (4) It is revelation that is the truth, v. 17.

“Sanctify [ἀγιάζω, *hagiazō*] them in the truth [τῇ ἀλήθειᾳ, *tē alētheia*]; Your word is truth.” “Sanctification” essentially means to keep *from* and *unto*, especially here in terms of being kept *from* worldly defilement *unto* being kept in righteous union with Christ. Jesus having personally sanctified this small band of disciples to date, that is preserved them from “the evil one,” vs. 12, 15; 15:3, the fact of His imminent departure and the prospective vast increase in the number of disciples comprising the church, v. 20, anticipates a new strategy of sanctification. While Jesus is the embodiment of “the truth,” (14:6), and He has mediated the verbal truth of the Father to His disciples, v. 8, now a new revelation of “the truth” is at hand, as v. 19 suggests. Specifically “the truth” here is not truth in general or even the broad expanse of Bible truth. Rather it is gospel truth that sanctifies in a declarative sense (I Cor. 1:2; Heb. 10:9-10), hitherto unknown by the disciples. In 8:31-32, it is continuation in “My [Jesus] word” defined as “the truth,” leading to the outworking of the gospel, that emancipates. Likewise 14:6 suggests “the truth” is Jesus as the mediatorial means by which a person “comes to the Father.” Further in 15:26, the ministry of the promised “Helper/Holy Spirit” will be to testify of “the truth” which Jesus defines as being “about Me,” especially His atonement. Nevertheless, every word of Jesus, as with His Father, is also “the truth,” which Scripture objectively and truthfully reveals. Thus, “the sum of Your Word is truth” (Ps. 119: 160).

¹¹ Manton, *Works*, 10, pp. 406-407.

c. Sanctification by the Father's truth, vs. 18-19.

The reason for Jesus not taking His disciples with Him to His Father in heaven is now further explained. The vocation of the Son in relation to His Father is to become the ground of the related vocation of the disciples appointed by the Son. However the cross becomes the fulcrum which connects both vocations.

(1) Christ's sanctifying commission of believers, v. 18.

“Just as You sent [ἀποστέλλω, *apostellō*] Me into the world, I also sent [*apostellō*] them into the world.” As Jesus is the Father's Apostle come from the Father to testify of Him, so the disciples are the Son's apostles who will have come from the Son to testify of Him and His Father. Following Jesus' resurrection, this truth is reiterated (20:21; cf. 13:20; 15:26-27). Here the distinctive role of the apostle is intimated, that of being personally commissioned and sent by Christ Himself (Acts 1:21-22), and uniquely sanctified in that office. Subsequent sanctified believers, not having been directly sent, will testify of “the apostle's teaching” (Acts 2:42; cf. Eph. 3:4-5; Jude 3, 17). Hence this hazardous calling necessitates sanctification of the twelve by the Father through the word, v. 17 as well as sanctification by means of the Son's atonement, v. 19. These are really two aspects of the one fundamental sanctification process, that is conversion of the twelve by means of the Father's appointment and the Son's obedience. Such a plan has earlier been established in eternity past; now the Son prays to the Father about its fulfillment, in the hearing of the disciple. for their edification.

(2) Christ's self-sanctification for believers, v. 19.

“And on behalf of them I sanctify/consecrate Myself in order that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.” It seems suggested here that what the Son prayed for from the Father in v. 17, in terms of sanctification, will at the same time be accomplished by the Son. In other words, what the Son actively performs will have been according to the direction of His Father since, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (5:30; cf. 5:19; 8:28). The sanctification of the Son here is not moral improvement, but self-consecration as a reflection of His moral perfection, His commitment to redeem, through total obedience, those given to Him by His Father (Luke 9:51; John 15:13). For the purpose of His saving of them, He sets Himself apart, He purposes to die, He “lays down His life so that He might take it again. No one has taken it away from Him, but He lays it down on His own initiative. He has authority to lay it down, and He has authority to take it up again” (John 10:17-18; cf. Matt. 26:53; John 2:19; 5:26; Eph. 5:25-26; Tit. 2:14), so that the disciples might be set apart as a consequence by the gospel. Here is Jesus' true active obedience. Furthermore, the divine salvation of a sinner is at the same time the sanctification of that sinner in a most definitive and final sense, that is, transference from darkness to light, the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ (Isa. 9:2; 42:16; Col. 1:13; I Pet. 2:9). So John Murray has rightly explained that,

in the New Testament the most characteristic terms that refer to sanctification are used, not of a process, but a once-for-all definitive act. . . . This means that there is a decisive and definitive breach with the power and service of sin in the case of every one who has come under the control of the provisions of grace.¹²

D. Prayer for the glorification of believers through the glorification of the Son, vs. 20-26.

Here further aspects of the doctrine of the true disciple's union with the triune God come to the fore. Union through the Holy Spirit has already been anticipated (7:38-39; 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14). Now that the Son is about to return to His Father, union with both of these Persons, and consequent union of true disciples on a universal scale, is of vital importance. It is significant that this is the desire of God ever before the desire of man!

1. Believers are glorified as they manifest a united, glorious body, vs. 20-23.

The union of the Father and the Son is foundational here, though along with this the imminent cry of the Son to the Father, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46), raises some profound questions. The Son having come from perfect union in the bosom of His Father (1:18), has experienced a degree of alienation because of His appointed earthly vocation. However, presently confident that He will not ultimately be "forsaken" by the Father at His hour of trial, He anticipates a restoration of that perfect union which particularly, it seems, is to be the ideal model for true believers. The Son's recovered glorious union will have added redemptive luster that will especially be the ground of spiritual fusion amongst believers in the church, world-wide.

a. The broad intercession of Christ for the unity of the faithful, v. 20.

"Not concerning these only do I ask, but also concerning those believing in Me through their word." Here is anticipation of the coming church age that will be inaugurated by the initial twelve apostles (Matt. 16:18-19; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:19-20; 3:5). Jesus' vision here is authentically ecumenical; the doctrinal connecting link is "the apostle's teaching" (Acts 2:42), the "word" of the Father given to the Son, then passed on to the initial apostles, v. 8, then passed on to "those also who believe in Me" throughout the world (Matt. 28:16-20). So our prayer should have universal dimensions concerning the spread of the gospel. From another perspective, "believing in Me" is to be the justifying ground of true ecumenical relations. Of course such "faith" presupposes the particular terms of "faith" that the Gospel of John establishes, especially concerning the divine person (as the Son of God) and atoning work of Christ (as the Lamb of God). For Christians in the present, it is comforting to be assured of not only Christ's past prayer for believers in the future, but also past believer's prayer for believers in the future.

b. The unity of Father and Son passed on to unite the faithful v. 21.

"In order that they all may be one, just as You, Father [are] in Me and I in You, in order that they also may be in Us, in order that the world may believe that You

¹² John Murray, *Collected Writings*, II, pp. 277, 280.

sent Me.” The “all” here is certainly universal in its perspective in the light of v. 21b, and “all whom You have given Him,” v. 2. But is the “oneness” here to be of form or faith, of an ecumenical movement or an ecumenical Spirit?

(1) It is to be a universal spiritual oneness or union.

Here is no mention of union under papal administration by the “King of the kings of the earth,” no physical apostolic succession, no episcopal authoritarianism, no conciliar authoritarianism, no denominational authoritarianism, no institutional conformity, etc. It is the union of Psalm 133:1-3 that is rooted in divine anointing, divine life, which at the same time reflects the diversity that existed within the unity of the twelve tribes of Israel. Such union also looks ahead to the diversity of the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch under the unity of the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), and the diversity of Spiritual gifts that comprise the unity of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:14-28; Eph. 4:4-6; I Pet. 1:2). Hence union here, not simply unity, concerns essential spiritual truth, at a common experiential level, that is not fractured by secondary diversity. Thus Carson comments that this union,

is not achieved by hunting enthusiastically for the lowest common theological denominator, but by common adherence to the apostolic gospel, by love that is joyfully self-sacrificing, by undaunted commitment to the shared goals of the mission with which Jesus’ followers have been charged, by self-conscious dependence on God himself for life and fruitfulness. It is a unity necessarily present, at least *in nuce* [in a nutshell], amongst genuine believers; it is a unity that must be brought to perfection.¹³

So John Newton has written of the essential grounds of true Christian union.

Jesus, where’er Thy people meet,
 There they behold Thy mercy seat;
 Where’er they seek Thee Thou art found,
 And every place is hallowed ground.
 For Thou, within no walls confined,
 Inhabitest the humble mind;
 Such ever bring Thee, where they come,
 And, going, take Thee to their home.
 Dear Shepherd of Thy chosen few,
 Thy former mercies here renew;
 Here, to our waiting hearts, proclaim
 The sweetness of Thy saving Name.
 Here may we prove the power of prayer
 To strengthen faith and sweeten care;
 To teach our faint desires to rise,
 And bring all Heav’n before our eyes.
 Behold at Thy commanding word,
 We stretch the curtain and the cord;

¹³ Carson, *John*, p. 568.

Come Thou, and fill this wider space,
 And bless us with a large increase.
 Lord, we are few, but Thou art near;
 Nor short Thine arm, nor deaf Thine ear;
 O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
 And make a thousand hearts Thine own!

- (2) It is to be modeled after the oneness or union of the Godhead.

The bosom union of the Father and the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit, is of personal diversity within essential holy unity. In one sense this union which Jesus prays for is not humanly attainable; but in another sense which Jesus has in mind, it is to be sought for in prayer and may be achieved. Consider in John the relationship between the Father in heaven while His Son dutifully ministers upon earth, that is the devoted, overshadowing concern of the Father for the Son's fulfillment of His appointed, redemptive task (3:35; 5:20); then consider the Son's whole-hearted, earthly consecration to the will of His Father (4:34; Luke 22:42). Then extend this to the heavenly consummation when the Father receives the Son back to His side and declares His "Well done!", while the Son basks in the perfect accomplishment of redemption that so magnifies His Father's original plan! Then consider how Christians are to model this mutual devotion in local church life! Hence Thomas Manton so excellently expounds:

Let us strive to imitate the Trinity in our respects both to the head and our fellow-members, that you may neither dishonor the head nor dissolve the union between the members. Christ useth this expression to draw us up to the highest and closest union with himself and one another. . . . Let your union with him [Christ] be more close and sensible, that you may lie in the bosom of Christ, as Christ doth in the bosom of God. Is Christ in us as God is in Christ? Are we made partakers of the divine nature as he is of ours? [II Pet. 1:2-4], that you may say to him, as Laban to Jacob: "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh" (Gen. 29:14), that you may [spiritually] feel Christ in you (Gal. 2:20).¹⁴

- (3) It is to be an effecting oneness or union.

This is a visible, noticeable spiritual union, having the intent "that the world may believe that You sent Me." The word "world," κόσμος, kosmos, is used 18 times in this chapter, having the greatest chapter concentration in the whole Bible; it is also found 22 times in I John! In John 17 "world" is the unbelieving global populace, 1:10, especially unbelieving Israel, 1:11, enshrouded in unholy global darkness, in the midst of which Christ is the only light come from heaven, while His disciples are divinely consecrated to be witnesses in this alien environment. From v. 20, it seems that more than the elect alone are here in mind. Rather "world" simply encompasses a universal audience that hears the gospel and gives general acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ sent from the Father, though not necessarily with true saving faith, as v. 23 also seems to indicate. Of the early church, not

¹⁴ Manton, Works, XI, pp. 36-37.

exclusively comprised of the elect, a watching world declared, “Behold, how these Christians love one another,”¹⁵ even as reflected in the triunity of God. Alfred Plummer makes an interesting observation:

The parallel between this verse and I John 1:3 is remarkable. If ἀπαγγέλλομεν, [apangellomen, proclaim] refers to the Gospel and not to the Epistle, as is probable, then Ssint John wrote his Gospel in order that this prayer of Christ might be fulfilled.¹⁶

c. The glory of Father and Son passed on to unite the faithful, v. 22.

“The glory which You have given to Me I also have given to them in order that they may be one just as We are one.” What is this transferred, effecting “glory,” obviously related to vs. 1, 5, 10, 24? The thrust of v. 21 continues with the perspective of glory being injected. Here is further proleptic announcement concerning what is about to be fully accomplished. Further proof is the immediate scattering (16:32) that is then followed by a new-found unity concerning “them,” eventually the twelve in the upper room (Acts 1:14; 2:1), that is now described. Hence the “glory” of Christ is that which shall be bestowed by the Father upon Jesus’ completion of His redemptive vocation not far hence, as vs. 1, 5 suggest (cf. Rom. 6:4; Phil. 2:9-11). As the Mediator, Jesus bestows the glory of grace through the Spirit on those He has redeemed (I Pet. 4:14). According to Manton, the Christian’s glory then is,

the full period of the present change and transformation into Christ’s image: “We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory” (II Cor. 3:18). Glory is but the consummation of grace, or our full conformity to Christ, or that final estate which is suitable to the dignity of the children of God. Therefore every one that looketh for eternal life in Christ, must be like him in this life.¹⁷

The result then is to be a divinely stimulated unity, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Thus union upon earth is rooted in the triune unity of the one God of Abraham. So John William Hewett, a nineteenth century country curate has well written:

O Christ, Who for Thy flock didst pray
That all might be as one,
Unite us all ere fades the day,
Thou sole begotten Son;
The East, the West, together bind
In love’s unbroken chain;
Give each one hope, one heart, one mind,
One glory, and one gain.

¹⁵ Manton writes that, “by the world is meant the reprobate lost world, who shall continue in final obstinacy. By believing is meant not true saving faith, but common conviction, . . . a temporary faith, or some general profession of religion (John 2:23-24; 12:42-43)” *Works*, II, p. 38.

¹⁶ Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 303.

¹⁷ Manton, *Works*, II, pp. 56-57.

- d. The glory of Father and Son passed on to perfect the faithful, v. 23.

“I in them and You in Me, in order that they may have been perfected [perfect tense of τελειόω, teleiōō] in oneness, in order that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them [past, present, and future disciples] just as You loved Me.” The thrust of vs. 21-22 continues whereby the unity of the Father and Son is communicated to unite true disciples of Christ, except that the perspective of perfection is now injected. “That they may have been perfected” suggests a growth in oneness that will come to completion (cf. Col. 4:12; Jas. 1:4), after the heavenly model. Manton illustrates the unity here as follows:

The golden cherubim did so look to the ark and mercy seat, that they did also look one towards another (Exod. 25:20). So in this union, as we respect God and Christ, so we must also look to our fellow-members.¹⁸

Again, as with v. 21, there is expressed here Christ’s desire that this unity should impact the world, with the added thought being that of the Father’s loving motivation in sending His Son to save His elect. There is also the nuance here that apart from the attractive, united fellowship of true believers, the unbelieving, spiritually ignorant world, v. 25, in spite of its soul darkness, is to be confronted with unavoidable, undeniable evidence of this divine visitation that even it can, to a degree, acknowledge.

2. Believers are glorified as they behold the glory of Christ, vs. 24-26.

This conclusion supremely anticipates Christ in heavenly, triumphant glory with His Father, being confronted with His redeemed, fully perfected, ascended disciples. However, in this present earthly state, these same disciples can, through Spirit activated faith, love, and unity, enjoy and view as well as anticipate this glory. In Christ’s description of this glorious hope by means of didactic prayer, it is the person of His Father who is dominant in terms of adoration and administration.

- a. The glory of Christ has made known the eternal Father, v. 24.

“Father, whom You have given to Me, I wish that where I Myself am, they also may be with Me in order that they may see My glory, which you have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation [καταβολή, katabolē] of the world.” This fourth of six references to “Father” in John 17 is Jesus’ invariable means of address in this Gospel, it never being “God.” His reference to “where I myself am” must surely be proleptic with reference to his imminent return to His Father (cf. v. 11), and not some location in Jerusalem. It is there, in bosom fellowship with His Father, that He desires the admiring fellowship of His disciples. There they will see His consummated glory and the Father’s adoring gaze (Phil. 2:9-11). There they will have better vision of the source of the plan of redemption and its eternal dimensions. There they will appreciate the love of God in its unveiled magnificence as never before! There they will behold Jesus as the Son of God as never before! There they will comprehend the promise that they would follow Jesus (13:36) as well as the preparation that Jesus had designed for them (14:2-3).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

- b. The glory of Christ has made known the righteous Father, v. 25.

“Righteous Father, even though the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.” In conjunction with “Holy Father”, v. 11, we see Jesus’ reverent adoration of the infinite moral glory of His Father which at the same time He as the Son embodies (John 12:40, cf. Isa. 6:1-10; II Cor, 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Because of this holy, moral perfection, the unholy, immoral world does not know the Father by nature and choice, its vain professions notwithstanding, even as the holy, spotless, moral Son of God most intimately does. Here the “like father, like son” principle applies, and even with respect to redeemed children of God. It should be kept in mind that it was because the world does not know God that Jesus was sent by His Father to effect that knowledge in the souls of whoever it was determined should be enlightened (Matt. 11:27; John 12:46). In this process, the present disciples, in spite of their evident weakness, have had revealed to them by Jesus that “You [Father] sent Me,” while v. 24 has expounded upon that fulfillment of knowledge concerning the Father and Son that will ultimately be embraced.

- c. The glory of Christ has made known the name of the Father, v. 26.

“And I have made known to them Your name and I will make [Your name] known, in order that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” In the light of v. 25, the knowledge of God is identical with the knowledge of His name, though the essence of this name is holy love (I John 4:7-19). However in Jesus, the knowledge of Jehovah, as the name of “I Am” represents, far surpasses any knowledge of “the Name” or “ha Shem” such as the Hebrew people previously understood. Further the present knowledge of God will yield to greater future knowledge that is subsequent to Pentecost and complete when the disciple eventually attains the presence of Christ in heaven. So the divine attribute of love is intended to be communicated toward true disciples of Christ. As Carson explains: “The love with which they learn to love is nothing less than the love amongst the persons of the Godhead.”¹⁹

Hence, with the conclusion of this greatest biblical prayer, so revelatory of the triune God in His heaven, so profound and transcendent, we take to heart the final commendation of Ryle.

Let us leave this wonderful prayer with a solemn recollection of the three great petitions which it contains. Let holiness and unity by the way, and Christ’s company in the end, be subjects never long out of our thoughts or distant from our minds. Happy is that Christian who cares for nothing so much as to be holy and loving like his Master, while he lives, and a companion to his Master when he dies.²⁰

¹⁹ Carson, *John*, p. 570.

²⁰ Ryle, *John*, III, p. 223.