

# In Jesus

## John 14:11-15

### Dr. Pierre Cannings

Subject: The appearance of these verses strikes the reader with incredible force. In the face of loneliness and Jesus' departure, the reader is confronted with another of the Johannine strategic double *amēn* sayings ("truly, truly"; , "I tell you the truth") that must always be taken as important statements of Jesus. In this case the saying provides a significant window into the postresurrection situation. Even though the disciples here may have been overwhelmed by sorrow (cf. 16:20), they are called to focus on the future rather than the present because most of the verbs are in the future tense in this section. Moreover, to highlight the postresurrection perspective the opening words "anyone who has faith" imply that the announcement is intended for many more than the present little band of Jesus' sorrowing followers.

## I. Believe in Me

- a. Believe- to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust, *believe be convinced*
  - i. In the Father
  - ii. Father in Me
    1. He has actualized His purpose in Christ Jesus, Eph. 3:11, He acted towards Jesus by bringing the sinless One to the cross and treating Him judicially as a sinner, 2 C. 5:21 → I, 312, 3 ff., but also by instituting Him as Kurios and Messiah through the resurrection, Ac. 2:36. The acting Father controls the work of the Son who is dependent on Him in love (Jn. 5:19, 20) in such a way that it may now be said that the Father dwelling in the Son does His works in the words of the Son, Jn. 14:10
    2. He does not say "Believe *in* me" here. He merely appeals (as at 5:47, 10:38) to the testimony of His own sayings, as worthy of credit (cf. 4:21).
    3. This close interdependent assertion is an affirmation of a close unity between the Father and the Son without assuming that the unity implies absolute identity (cf. 10:38). But such interdependent unity is far more than a mere example of the rabbinic idea of agency, where the agent is an obedient servant/envoy of the master so that the servant acts as or

becomes an alter ego of the master. Jesus certainly fulfills this role of agency, but he is much more than a functioning servant. The reason is that between Jesus and the Father one soon realizes that the reciprocal “in-ness” represents a kind of interpenetration of natures. Still we must also stress that, for John, Jesus is said to be obedient to the Father and not the reverse (5:30; 8:29; 14:10; etc.).

b. Works - deed, accomplishment

- i. This is the appeal to His miraculous *works* (cf. 3:2, 5:36, 10:37) in support of His great claim of unity with the Father. The faith which is generated by an appeal like this is not the highest type of faith, but it is not despised by Jesus. Better to believe because of miracles than not to believe at all. See on 6:36, 10:38; and cf. 2:23, 3:2, 4:48.
- ii. If such assertions transcend understanding and therefore are difficult to grasp in faith, appeal is made to “believe the works,” i.e., the signs of Jesus. The major part of this Gospel is taken up with the narration of the signs performed by him and expositions of their meaning. They who penetrate the significance of Jesus turning water into wine, of his healing miracles, of the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness and the walking on the water, and of the raising of Lazarus, will perceive in Jesus the saving sovereignty of *God* in action and his utterances as “words of eternal life” (6:68). In the words and works of Jesus the eschatological purpose of God is both declared and fulfilled
- iii. First, throughout vv 12–14 the future tense is used; the period in view is that following the “lifting up” of Jesus to the throne of God, and so refers to the post-Easter era of the Church. Second, the passage is a single sentence and has a single dominant theme. The significance of this will appear shortly. Third, “the works that I do,” in v 12a are clearly his miraculous works, the “signs” of the ministry which have featured so largely in the so-called “Book of Signs,” chaps. 2–12
- iv. Accordingly, the works/miracles that Jesus did are in reality the works of the Father, and here Jesus told the disciples that if they had difficulty believing his “words,” they should believe because of his “works” (*erga*). Jesus earlier offered this same pattern of testing his words by his works to the Jews, who were ready to stone him (cf. 10:37–38).

## II. Works in Me

### a. Believer in Me

#### i. My Works

### b. Greater Works

#### i. Great-

1. *will do greater works than these.* Reflection will show that the “greater works” here mentioned are not more miraculous miracles than the miracles of Jesus (the Evangelist has stressed the motif of abundance in the signs of the new age in the water into wine and the feeding of the multitude, the divine power in the walking on the water, and the extraordinary nature of giving sight to the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus four days in the tomb). Nor is it likely that the first thought is that of the greater success of the disciples in their subsequent mission to Israel and the nations. Is the point in view not rather *the conveying to people of the spiritual realities of which the works of Jesus are “signs”*? All the works of Jesus are significant of the saving sovereignty of God at work among humankind through the eschatological Redeemer
2. The main reality to which they point, and which makes their testimony a set of variations on a single theme, is the life eternal of the kingdom of God through Jesus its mediator. This is confirmed by the striking parallel to v 12 in 5:20 and its following exposition: the Father shows the Son all (sc the works) that he himself does, “and greater works than these he will show him, that you may be amazed.” The context reveals that the “greater works” that the Father is to “show” the Son, greater than those given him to do thus far, are manifestations of resurrection and judgment, but with emphasis on the former (as 5:24–26 in relation to v 17 shows). Thus the “greater works” that the disciples are to do after Easter are the actualization of the realities to which the works of Jesus point, the bestowal of the blessings and powers of the kingdom of God upon men and women which the death and resurrection of Jesus are to let loose in the world
3. The fourth observation is the continuity between vv 12c and 13a, and their connection with the performing of the greater works by the disciples. The fundamental ground by which the greater works are made possible is the “going” of Jesus to the Father, i.e., his

death and resurrection to sovereignty which releases the powers of the kingdom of God in the world; the second ground is the prayer of the disciples in the name of Jesus, i.e., prayer with appeal to his name, in response to which *the risen Lord himself will do what is asked*. The continuity of thought demands that the prayer that is made is in relation to the disciples' ministry, and the Lord on high will through his disciples perform the greater works

4. **καὶ μείζονα τούτων**, "greater things," not necessarily more extraordinary "miracles," to the eye of the unspiritual observer. These works of wonder, healing the blind and the sick, etc., were not reckoned by Jesus among His own "greater" works (see on 5:20). The "greater things" which the apostles were to achieve, were the far-reaching spiritual effects which their preaching was to bring about. The teaching of the Incarnate Son was confined to one country, and while He was in the flesh His adherents were few. But His Church made conquest of the nations of the world.
  5. The apostles would not necessarily do more stupendous miracles than Jesus did (e.g., feeding 5,000) but their outreach would be greater (e.g., Peter in one sermon had 3,000 converts). This was possible **because** Jesus had gone **to the Father** and had sent the Spirit. Miracles are important, but some evangelists have done **even greater things than these** by preaching the good news to many thousands of people
  6. all that Jesus began to do and teach" until his exaltation to heaven (Acts 1:1–2). The implication of the statement in Acts is *not* that Jesus ceased to work at that point but that Luke's second volume implied that *Jesus continued to work through* the early Christians. Accordingly, when Peter heals Aeneas, Peter says, "Jesus Christ heals you" (Acts 9:34). Moreover, when the pre-Christian Saul/Paul is on the way to persecute the Christians in Damascus and he is struck blind, he hears the voice saying, "Why do you persecute me?" When he asks who the voice is, the reply comes, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Saul was in fact persecuting Christians, but the voice identified the persecuted one as Jesus (Acts 9:1–5). The conclusion can only be that for Luke, Jesus was still active in mission; but although he was with God, he was now working in and through the church
- ii. Because I go to the Father

1. The contrast accordingly is not between Jesus and his disciples in their respective ministries, but between Jesus with his disciples in the limited circumstances of his earthly ministry and the risen Christ with his disciples in the post-Easter situation. Then the limitations of the Incarnation will no longer apply, redemption will have been won for the world, the kingdom of God opened for humanity, and the disciples equipped for a ministry in power to the nations. Nothing has been said thus far about the sending of the Spirit, but that is shortly to be made known. Here the emphasis is on the continuing ministry of the Lord with and through his disciples, by whom the glorification of the Father in the Son will be continued.

### III. Ask of Me v.13-14

#### a. My name

##### i. My Name

1. **In My name** (vv. 13–14) is not a magical formula of invocation. But the prayers of believers, as Christ's representatives doing His business, will be answered. John expanded this teaching in his first epistle. He wrote, "If we ask anything according to His will ... we have what we asked of Him" (1 John 5:14–15). To **ask Me for anything in My name** means to ask according to His will (cf. "in My name" in John 15:16; 16:23–24, 26).

##### ii. I will do it

1. He had appealed to His ἔργα. He now assures His hearers that the Christian believer shall be endued with power to do the like or even greater things, and in particular that he shall have the secret of efficacious prayer (vv. 13, 14).
2. It is not said here to whom the prayer is addressed, but we should probably understand τὸν πατέρα as at 15:16, 16:23. Jesus is the Way (v. 6), and while prayers are naturally addressed to the Father, they are addressed through Jesus, "in the Name of" Jesus
3. There is, however, an advance here on the teaching of 15:16, 16:23. In the former passages it is the Father who answers prayer, who gives what the faithful petitioner asks; but here and at v. 14 it is the Son who is to grant the boon, ποιήσω being twice repeated. For, in the teaching of Jesus as presented in Jn., what the Father does, the Son does (cf. 10:30)

4. John has in this final subsection sought to give his readers a sense of hope in the promise of the coming power that will be experienced through the believer's relationship to Jesus. But the invitation to pray for "anything" (14:14) in this context is not, in fact, to be understood as "anything" in the absolute sense because the guiding principle of the believer's prayer must be the same principle that Jesus followed throughout his life. That principle was the glorification of the Father in and through everything done by the Son (14:13). To read this promise of Jesus concerning asking in any other way would be a complete misunderstanding of the promise.
  5. Jesus lived in the will of the Father, and the Christian is duty bound to live in the will of Jesus. Appropriate praying/asking here, therefore, must follow the same model Jesus exemplified
- iii. Father glorified in the Son
    1. Glorified - **to cause to have splendid greatness, clothe in splendor, glorify**, of the glory that comes in the next life

## IV. Keep My v.15

- a. Love
- b. Keep my commandments
  - i. The phrase τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς is thoroughly Johannine (cf. 15:10, 1 Jn. 2:3, 4, 3:22, 24, 5:2, 3). It is the phrase used for "keeping" the Ten Commandments (cf. Mt. 19:17, 1 Cor. 7:19); and that the precept "keep my commandments" should be placed in the mouth of Jesus is significant of His claim to be equal with God (cf. 13:34).
  - ii. Obey what I command (*entolas*) is not merely to be understood as obeying a series of ethical precepts or rules of morality. For John the "commands" (John 14:17, 21), "my word" (14:23–24, *logos*, the has "teaching" and "words"), and "my words" (14:24, the has "teaching") are closely related and involve the entire scope of Jesus' teaching and revelation (cf. 8:31; 12:47, 50;

## Word Studies

Believe - **to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust, believe<sup>1</sup> be convinced of**

Works- deed, accomplishment

Great- **to being above standard in intensity,<sup>2</sup>**

The Johannine Use.

Jesus tells Nathanael, who saw that he was known by Him: μείζω τούτων ὄψῃ (Jn. 1:50). This promise is elucidated by the general promise: ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα ...<sup>337</sup> The reference is to seeing the δόξα of Jesus, in which they will share when they are drawn into it.<sup>348</sup> This takes place because through and in Jesus they see God and are set in fellowship with Him. Jesus expects for Himself: ὁ ... πατήρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ἵνα ὑμεῖς θαυμάζητε, 5:20. He does not do His miracles of Himself. He fulfils what the Father, with whom He is one in love, manifests to Him. He will show Him greater works than the miracle wrought at the pool of Bethesda on the man who had been lame for 38 years. What this greater thing is may be seen in the following verse. It is a matter of

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 816.

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 623.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. on this H. Windisch, ZNW, 30 (1931), 215 ff.; J. Jeremias, *Angelos*, 3 (1930), 2–5.

<sup>438</sup> On the question of different strata in the pericope cf. R. Bultmann, *Das Johannesevangelium* (1937), 74 f.

ζωοποιεῖν. This is the greater thing compared with the miracles which He performs.<sup>539</sup> To the disciple who abides in faith in Christ the promise is made: ηείζονα τούτω ποιήσει, and the basis of this is His going to the Father (14:12). This going to the Father gives Him the possibility of greater efficacy exercised through the disciples.<sup>6</sup>

Do- **to undertake or do someth<sup>7</sup>. that brings about an event, state, or condition, do, cause, bring about, accomplish, prepare,** etc.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to God's ποιεῖν apart from the work of creation it is characteristic that the word is less often used for God's judicial punishment and more often used with reference to His helping and redeeming activity. The κράτος ποιεῖν of Lk. 1:51 speaks of God's immanent judgment and ἐκδίκησιν in Lk. 18:7 f., κρίσιν ποιεῖν in Jd. 15, and ποιεῖν in the sense of "behave" in Mt. 18:35 all refer to eschatological judgment. ποιεῖν denotes God's saving work in combination with the appropriate objects: λύτρωσις in Lk. 1:68, ἔλεος in Lk. 1:72, τὸ εὐάρεστον ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ in Hb. 13:21. God makes the διαθήκη for the patriarchs (Hb. 8:9). He makes the Gospel known to the Gentiles (Ac. 15:17). He acts through Paul and Barnabas (Ac. 14:27; 15:4; 21:19). He puts an end to temptation in 1 C. 10:13, and His work surpasses all that we can ask or think in Eph. 3:20. It concerns individuals, Elisabeth in Lk. 1:25, Mary in 1:49, the demoniac in Mk. 5:19 and par<sup>9</sup>. Finally God will make all things new, Rev. 21:5. Hence Christians, as those who are raised up with Christ and set in the heavenly world, are God's ποίημα Eph. 2:10. God performs what He has promised, R. 4:21; 9:28. He completes what He has begun as He who calls, 1 Th. 5:24. As in the LXX (→ 460, 43 ff.) He does σημεῖα, τέρατα (Ac.

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<sup>539</sup> → II, 869; 875; E. Hirsch, *Das vierte Evangelium* (1936): "The greatest thing which He shows and gives Him is the power to create life out of death ... Jesus' works should not be confused with His signs. The works go beyond the signs. They embrace them, but are His total action towards us," 161.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Grundmann, "[Μέγας. Μεγαλεῖον. Μεγαλειότης. Μεγαλοπρεπής. Μεγαλύνω. Μεγαλωσύνη. Μέγεθος.](#)" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 536–537.

<sup>7</sup>**someth. someth.** = something

<sup>8</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 839.

<sup>9</sup>par. parallel.

15:12) and δυνάμεις (Ac. 19:11) through the apostles, or τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα through Jesus (Ac. 2:22). He has actualised His purpose in Christ Jesus, Eph. 3:11, He acted towards Jesus by bringing the sinless One to the cross and treating Him judicially as a sinner, 2 C. 5:21 → I, 312, 3 ff., but also by instituting Him as Kurios and Messiah through the resurrection, Ac. 2:36. The acting Father controls the work of the Son who is dependent on Him in love (Jn. 5:19, 20) in such a way that it may now be said that the Father dwelling in the Son does His works in the words of the Son, Jn. 14:10.<sup>10</sup>

Glorified- **to cause to have splendid greatness, clothe in splendor, glorify**, of the glory that comes in the next life<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Herbert Braun, [“Ποιέω, Ποίημα, Ποίησις, Ποιητής.”](#) in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 464.

<sup>11</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 258.

## Commentary Studies

**11** If such assertions transcend understanding and therefore are difficult to grasp in faith, appeal is made to “believe the works,” i.e., the signs of Jesus. The major part of this Gospel is taken up with the narration of the signs performed by him and expositions of their meaning. They who penetrate the significance of Jesus turning water into wine, of his healing miracles, of the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness and the walking on the water, and of the raising of Lazarus, will perceive in Jesus the saving sovereignty of *God* in action and his utterances as “words of eternal life” (6:68). In the words and works of Jesus the eschatological purpose of God is both declared and fulfilled.

### *Jesus, the Power of the Disciples’ Mission (14:12–14)*

**12–14** The appeal for faith in Jesus, which has run through the discourse thus far, is continued in this passage and is given an encouragement which is nothing less than breathtaking. In order to understand it rightly, certain observations require to be grasped. First, throughout vv 12–14 the future tense is used; the period in view is that following the “lifting up” of Jesus to the throne of God, and so refers to the post-Easter era of the Church. Second, the passage is a single sentence and has a single dominant theme. The significance of this will appear shortly. Third, “the works that I do,” in v 12a are clearly his miraculous works, the “signs” of the ministry which have featured so largely in the so-called “Book of Signs,” chaps. 2–12. It is illegitimate to identify them with the “word” of Jesus on the ground of the close connection of word and works in v 10bc (as Bultmann did, 610–11; followed by Haenchen, 475, and Becker, 2:464); v 11b, with its parallel in 10:37–38, shows quite plainly that works performed by Jesus that confirm the word spoken by him are in mind. The assertion then is made that the believer in Jesus will (in an unspecified future, but in light of vv 3, 13 f., and the rest of the chapter, after the “departure” of Jesus through death-resurrection) will have power to perform the works such as those done by Jesus in his earthly ministry. Note that the participle ὁ πιστεύων,

“whoever believes,” is general, and not confined to the apostolic group. But further, the believer “will do *greater* works than these.” Reflection will show that the “greater works” here mentioned are not more miraculous miracles than the miracles of Jesus (the Evangelist has stressed the motif of abundance in the signs of the new age in the water into wine and the feeding of the multitude, the divine power in the walking on the water, and the extraordinary nature of giving sight to the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus four days in the tomb). Nor is it likely that the first thought is that of the greater success of the disciples in their subsequent mission to Israel and the nations. Is the point in view not rather *the conveying to people of the spiritual realities of which the works of Jesus are “signs”*? All the works of Jesus are significant of the saving sovereignty of God at work among humankind through the eschatological Redeemer. p 255 The main reality to which they point, and which makes their testimony a set of variations on a single theme, is the life eternal of the kingdom of God through Jesus its mediator. This is confirmed by the striking parallel to v 12 in 5:20 and its following exposition: the Father shows the Son all (sc<sup>12</sup>., the works) that he himself does, “and greater works than these he will show him, that you may be amazed.” The context reveals that the “greater works” that the Father is to “show” the Son, greater than those given him to do thus far, are manifestations of resurrection and judgment, but with emphasis on the former (as 5:24–26 in relation to v 17 shows). Thus the “greater works” that the disciples are to do after Easter are the actualization of the realities to which the works of Jesus point, the bestowal of the blessings and powers of the kingdom of God upon men and women which the death and resurrection of Jesus are to let loose in the world.

The fourth observation is the continuity between vv 12c and 13a, and their connection with the performing of the greater works by the disciples. The fundamental ground by which the greater works are made possible is the “going” of Jesus to the Father, i.e., his death and resurrection to sovereignty which releases the powers of the kingdom of God in the world; the second ground is the prayer of the disciples in the name of Jesus, i.e., prayer with appeal to his name, in response to which *the risen Lord himself will do what is asked*. The continuity of thought demands that the prayer that is made is in relation to the disciples’ ministry, and the Lord on high will through his disciples perform the greater works. The contrast accordingly is not between Jesus and his disciples in their respective ministries, but between Jesus with his disciples in the limited circumstances of his earthly ministry and the risen Christ with his disciples in the post-Easter situation. Then the limitations of the Incarnation will no longer apply, redemption will have been won for the world, the kingdom of God opened for humanity, and the disciples equipped for a ministry in power to the nations. Nothing has been said thus far about the sending of the Spirit, but that is shortly to be made known. Here the emphasis is on the continuing ministry of the Lord with and through his disciples, by whom the glorification of the Father in the Son will be continued.

In view of the extension of the sentence of vv 12–13 into v 14 it is likely that prayer in the service of the saving sovereignty of God is still primarily in mind, though a secondary extension to more general prayer is not to be ruled out (for a helpful comparison of the sayings on prayer in the Gospel and First Epistle of John see Brown, 2:633–36). The important additional feature in

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<sup>12</sup>sc. scilicet, that is to say or understand

v 14 is its reference to prayer to Jesus: “If you ask *me* anything in my name I will do it.” In view of the tightness of the context it is possible that the prayer in v 13 is of the same kind, i.e., directed to Jesus. If otherwise the prayer in v 13 is to the Father in the name of Jesus, to which Jesus himself responds. In both cases prayer “in the name of Jesus” denotes petition with invocation of his name or appeal to his name; while there are evident differences of nuance, accordingly as prayer is addressed to Jesus or the Father, the fundamental factor is the role of Jesus as mediator between God and his people. (For illuminating discussions of the concept see especially Heitmüller, *Im Namen Jesu*, 77–80; Bietenhard in *TDN*<sup>13</sup> 5:258–61, 276.)<sup>14</sup>

**11. ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΤΕ ΜΟΙ.** The plural shows that Jesus now addresses Himself not to Philip individually, but to the disciples collectively, whose spokesman for the moment Philip was. “Believe me,” sc. believe my words when I tell you that I am in the Father and the Father in me (repeated in identical terms from v. 10). He does not say “Believe *in* me” here. He merely appeals (as at 5:47, 10:38) to the testimony of His own sayings, as worthy of credit (cf. 4:21).

**εἰ δὲ μή, διὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτὰ πιστεύετε μοι.** This is the appeal to His miraculous *works* (cf. 3:2, 5:36, 10:37) in support of His great claim of unity with the Father. The faith which is generated by an appeal like this is not the highest type of faith, but it is not despised by Jesus. Better to believe because of miracles than not to believe at all. See on 6:36, 10:38; and cf. 2:23, 3:2, 4:48.

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<sup>13</sup> *TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

<sup>14</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 254–255.

The concluding μοι is omitted after ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΤΕ by <sup>15</sup>κ<sup>16</sup>D<sup>17</sup>L<sup>18</sup>W, but ins. <sup>19</sup>A<sup>20</sup>B<sup>21</sup>Γ<sup>22</sup>Δ<sup>23</sup>Θ.

**12. ἄμην ἄμην λέγω ὑμῖν**, the customary prelude to a solemn and unexpected saying. See on 1:51.

He had appealed to His ἔργα. He now assures His hearers that the Christian believer shall be endowed with power to do the like or even greater things, and in particular that he shall have the secret of efficacious prayer (vv. 13, 14).

**ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ** This He had bidden them all to do (v. 1), and He returns to the phrase, which involves more than ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΤΕ μοι of v. 11 (see on 1:12). But, as Bengel says, “qui Christo de se loquenti credit, in Christum credit.”

**τὰ ἔργα ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ κάκεινος ποιήσει.** He had already given such power to the Twelve (Mk. 6:7, 13), and in [Mk.] 16:17 it is recorded that He renewed this assurance after His Resurrection.

**καὶ μείζονα τούτων**, “greater things,” not necessarily more extraordinary “miracles,” to the eye of the unspiritual observer. These works of wonder, healing the blind and the sick, etc., were not reckoned by Jesus among His own “greater” works (see on 5:20). The “greater things” which the apostles were to achieve, were the far-reaching spiritual effects which their preaching was to bring about. The teaching of the Incarnate Son was confined to one country, and while He was in the flesh His adherents were few. But His Church made conquest of the nations of the world.

**ὅτι ἐγὼ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα πορεύομαι.** His departure from their visible presence increased the apostles’ spiritual power (see on 16:7 above). As He goes on to explain (vv. 13,

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<sup>15</sup>κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

<sup>16</sup>D *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D<sup>supp</sup>).

<sup>17</sup>L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

<sup>18</sup>W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

<sup>19</sup>A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

<sup>20</sup>B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

<sup>21</sup>Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

<sup>22</sup>Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

<sup>23</sup>Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

14), their spiritual effectiveness in prayer will be increased beyond all limits hitherto presupposed, for their prayers will be offered “in His Name.”

For **πρὸς τὸν πατέρα πορεύομαι**, cf. v. 28; and see on 16:28.

**13. καὶ ὃ τι ἂν αἰτήσητε κτλ.** “And” (further, in addition to the promise of v. 12, and following from it) “whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, I will do it.” See on 15:16 for this great promise, here repeated for the fifth time.

It is not said here to whom the prayer is addressed, but we should probably understand τὸν πατέρα as at 15:16, 16:23. Jesus is the Way (v. 6), and while prayers are naturally addressed to the Father, they are addressed through Jesus, “in the Name of” Jesus.

There is, however, an advance here on the teaching of 15:16, 16:23. In the former passages it is the Father who answers prayer, who gives what the faithful petitioner asks; but here and at v. 14 it is the Son who is to grant the boon, ποιήσω being twice repeated. For, in the teaching of Jesus as presented in Jn., what the Father does, the Son does (cf. 10:30). Swete’s paraphrase is thoroughly Johannine. “We pray to the Father in Christ’s Name; we receive the answer from the Father. Yet we receive it through the Son and by the action of the Son.” The difference between δώσει, “He will give,” of 16:23, and ποιήσω, “I will do,” of 14:13 is the difference between the Jewish and the Christian doctrine of prayer.

**ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ.** This is only verbally similar to 13:31, where see note. All that is done by Christ in His heavenly ministry is a “glorification” of the Father, a revelation to men of His power and compassion. This is the final cause of Christ’s work.

For the absolute use of υἱός in Jn., see on 3:35.

**14.** This verse is wholly omitted in two minor uncials, as well as in 1, 22, *b*, *ful*, the Sinai Syriac, and Nonnus—a strong and unusual combination. The omission may be due to homoioteleuton, v. 14 being repeated from v. 13. <sup>24</sup>A<sup>25</sup>B<sup>26</sup>L and *fam.* 13, indeed, repeat τοῦτο

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<sup>24</sup>A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

<sup>25</sup>B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

<sup>26</sup>L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

ποιήσω from v. 13, but <sup>27</sup>κ<sup>28</sup>D<sup>29</sup>W<sup>30</sup>Θ in v. 14 replace τοῦτο by ἐγώ. So <sup>31</sup>A<sup>32</sup>D<sup>33</sup>L follow v. 13 in reading αἰτήσητε ἐν κτλ, but <sup>34</sup>κ<sup>35</sup>B<sup>36</sup>W<sup>37</sup>Γ<sup>38</sup>Δ<sup>39</sup>Θ have αἰτήσητέ με ἐν κτλ.

If the verse is to be retained, it must be taken as a repetition in slightly different terms of what has been said already: a construction which is quite in the style of Jn.<sup>401</sup> ἐγώ clearly lays special emphasis on Jesus being Himself the answerer of the prayer: “I will see that it is done.”

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<sup>27</sup>κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

<sup>28</sup>D *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D<sup>supp</sup>).

<sup>29</sup>W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

<sup>30</sup>Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

<sup>31</sup>A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

<sup>32</sup>D *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D<sup>supp</sup>).

<sup>33</sup>L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

<sup>34</sup>κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

<sup>35</sup>B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

<sup>36</sup>W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

<sup>37</sup>Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

<sup>38</sup>Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

<sup>39</sup>Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

<sup>401</sup> See on 3:16.

But the insertion of με after αἰτήσητε, which the best MS<sup>41</sup>S support, involves the harsh and unexampled phrase, “If ye shall ask *me* in *my* Name.” No doubt, it may be urged that the man who is *in* Christ alone can offer petitions *to* Christ which are certain of acceptance. He whose will is in harmony with Christ’s will, and who therefore can truly pray “in His Name,” may be assured that Christ will perform what he asks. Yet the expression “ask me in my Name” is awkward, and does not occur elsewhere, the other passages in these discourses in which prayers in the Name of Christ are recommended explicitly mentioning the Father as Him to whom these prayers should be addressed (cf. 15:16, 16:23, 24). The Johannine teaching would not indeed stumble at the addressing of prayer to Christ. He who prays to the Father, prays to the Son, so intimate is their ineffable union (cf. 10:30); but, nevertheless, no explicit mention of prayer to the Son is found elsewhere in Jn., unless 16:23 (where see note) is an exception.

We conclude that με must be rejected here,<sup>422</sup> despite its strong MS<sup>43</sup>. support; and we read **ἐάν τι αἰτήσητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐγὼ ποιήσω**, the thought being carried on from the previous verse, a special emphasis being laid upon ἐγὼ.

*Love Issuing in Obedience Will Be Followed by the Gift of the Paraclete, Revealing the Union of the Father and the Son (vv. 15–20)*

**15. ἐὰν ἀγαπᾶτέ με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε** (so <sup>44</sup>κ<sup>45</sup>B<sup>46</sup>L, which is to be preferred to τηρήσατε of <sup>47</sup>A<sup>48</sup>D<sup>49</sup>Θ and the rec. text), “if you love me, you will keep my commandments,” as it is said again (v. 23), ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με, τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει. Love issues in obedience. The converse, “he who keeps my commandments loves me,” is found at v. 21 (the love then fulfilling itself in knowledge, 1 Jn. 2:3). For the verb ἀγαπᾶν, as used in Jn. of the love of His disciples for Jesus, see on 3:16.

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<sup>41</sup>MSS manuscripts

<sup>422</sup> Blass omits με.

<sup>43</sup>MS. manuscript

<sup>44</sup>κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

<sup>45</sup>B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

<sup>46</sup>L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

<sup>47</sup>A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

<sup>48</sup>D *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D<sup>supp</sup>).

<sup>49</sup>Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

The phrase τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς is thoroughly Johannine (cf. 15:10, 1 Jn. 2:3, 4, 3:22, 24, 5:2, 3). It is the phrase used for “keeping” the Ten Commandments (cf. Mt. 19:17, 1 Cor. 7:19); and that the precept “keep *my* commandments” should be placed in the mouth of Jesus is significant of His claim to be equal with God (cf. 13:34).

In Jn. τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς μου is used interchangeably with τηρεῖν τὸν λόγον μου (8:51, 14:23, 24, 15:20, 1 Jn. 2:5).<sup>50</sup>

**14:10–11** For the disciples to ask to see the Father in the presence of Jesus, therefore, must be regarded as an indication of a serious problem. What was the problem? Jesus here in John identified that problem as an issue of “believing” (*pisteuein*). If Paul would have been writing here, he would undoubtedly have called it a problem of “faith” (*pistis*) (Rom 4:11–20; 14:23; 2 Cor 5:7; Gal 3:22–26). Accordingly, at this point in John, Jesus asks them a follow-up question (v. 10) and then challenges them (v. 11) to believe that he is “in the Father” and the Father is in him.

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<sup>50</sup> J. H. Bernard, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John\*](#), ed. Alan Hugh McNeile, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’ Sons, 1929), 542–545.

Schnackenburg categorizes this dual “in-ness” of Jesus and the Father as a “reciprocal formula of immanence.”<sup>12512</sup> This close interdependent assertion is an affirmation of a close unity between the Father and the Son without assuming that the unity implies absolute identity (cf. 10:38). But such interdependent unity is far more than a mere example of the rabbinic idea of agency, where the agent is an obedient servant/envoy of the master so that the servant acts as or becomes an alter ego of the master.<sup>12523</sup> Jesus certainly fulfills this role of agency, but he is much more than a functioning servant. The reason is that between Jesus and the Father one soon realizes that the reciprocal “in-ness” represents a kind of interpenetration of natures. Still we must also stress that, for John, Jesus is said to be obedient to the Father and not the reverse (5:30; 8:29; 14:10; etc.).

Accordingly, the works/miracles that Jesus did are in reality the works of the Father, and here Jesus told the disciples that if they had difficulty believing his “words,” they should believe because of his “works” (*erga*). Jesus earlier offered this same pattern of testing his words by his works to the Jews, who were ready to stone him (cf. 10:37–38). But the stone throwers had already rejected works as a confirmation for or against what they considered to be heretical words (10:32). For the Johannine evangelist the works of Jesus were signs pointing to the reality of who Jesus was (cf. 5:20; 9:3–4; 10:25).<sup>12534</sup> As Carson indicates, the miracles “are nonverbal Christological signposts.”<sup>12545</sup> They are, from my view, hermeneutical acts that provide keys to understanding who this Jesus really was when he was on earth.

### **(3) The Power of Believing (14:12–14)**

**<sup>12</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. <sup>14</sup> You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.**

**14:12–14** The appearance of these verses strikes the reader with incredible force. In the face of loneliness and Jesus’ departure, the reader is confronted with another of the Johannine

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<sup>51122</sup> Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3.69–70.

<sup>52123</sup> For the rabbinic idea of agency see the Mishnah *Berk* 5:4–5 and the Babylonian Talmud *Qidd* 43a.

<sup>53124</sup> For a further discussion of signs see Excursus 10 in the first volume of this commentary, Borchert, *John 1–11*, 346–48.

<sup>54125</sup> See Carson, *John*, 495.

strategic double *amēn* sayings (“truly, truly”; NI<sup>55V</sup>, “I tell you the truth”<sup>12566</sup>) that must always be taken as important statements of Jesus. In this case the saying provides a significant window into the postresurrection situation. Even though the disciples here may have been overwhelmed by sorrow (cf. 16:20), they are called to focus on the future rather than the present because most of the verbs are in the future tense in this section. Moreover, to highlight the postresurrection perspective the opening words “anyone who has faith” imply that the announcement is intended for many more than the present little band of Jesus’ sorrowing followers.<sup>12577</sup>

The content of the announcement is even more striking because Jesus moves the attention of the Johannine readers away from his works as a test or confirmation of who he is/was to the fact that the believer(s) “will do” “those same” (*kakeinos*) works that he has been doing. But if that statement was not sufficiently electrifying, it is then said that the believer(s) will do “greater things” (*meizona*) than Jesus has been doing because of Jesus’ departure to the Father. It does not take a genius to imagine how many interpretations of this statement are possible. It should be noted at the outset, however, that “greater” can hardly here mean that believers will do more dramatic works than the raising of Lazarus (11:43–44), the changing of water to wine (2:7–11), the walking on the Sea of Galilee (6:19), the multiplying of loaves and fish (6:9–14), or any of the other amazing acts of Jesus.

The meaning of the statement must therefore arise out of the context of the discussion involving the fact that Jesus is speaking of his departure to the Father, namely, his death and resurrection. If that is the case, then, the basis for the “greater” is rooted in the expansive implications of Jesus’ mission in light of his “glorification” (cf. 17:1–2). Jesus’ departure is in effect the work of the “Lamb of God” in taking away the “sin of the world” (1:29) or the fact that he is the “Savior of the World” (4:42). Accordingly, his death and subsequent resurrection are to be seen as drawing all people to himself (12:32). But strategically this work would also require the work of those who believe because their task would be to communicate to the world the forgiveness of sins (20:23).

The works founded upon the “going” of Jesus to the Father (14:12) can, therefore, only involve the post-Easter mission of the church. To gain some insight in this matter we turn briefly to Luke. In writing the introduction to his exciting Book of Acts, in which he details the powerful works involving the early Christians, Luke also reminds us of a similar crucial perspective.<sup>12588</sup> In

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<sup>55</sup>NIV New International Version

<sup>56126</sup> The NIV rendering “I tell you the truth” is a fair attempt at emphasizing the oathlike nature of the double “truly” statements in English. But most English readers generally do not recognize the force of Semitic statements like this one.

<sup>57127</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 254, who also notes that the verses here are, in fact, a single sentence.

<sup>58128</sup> Cf. the excellent treatments of Acts in J. Polhill, *Acts* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 78–80 and R. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 253.

the introduction to Acts he asserted that the “former book,” namely, the Gospel of Luke, detailed “all that Jesus began to do and teach” until his exaltation to heaven (Acts 1:1–2). The implication of the statement in Acts is *not* that Jesus ceased to work at that point but that Luke’s second volume implied that *Jesus continued to work through* the early Christians. Accordingly, when Peter heals Aeneas, Peter says, “Jesus Christ heals you” (Acts 9:34). Moreover, when the pre-Christian Saul/Paul is on the way to persecute the Christians in Damascus and he is struck blind, he hears the voice saying, “Why do you persecute me?” When he asks who the voice is, the reply comes, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Saul was in fact persecuting Christians, but the voice identified the persecuted one as Jesus (Acts 9:1–5). The conclusion can only be that for Luke, Jesus was still active in mission; but although he was with God, he was now working in and through the church.

Although John does not express himself in the same way as Luke, there is a commonality of viewpoints. John’s postresurrection perspective is enunciated in the words of Jesus to the disciples, “I will do whatever you ask in my name” (14:13). These words, as Brown argued, suggest a prayer context<sup>12599</sup> because asking either God or the departed Jesus can hardly be accomplished in a face-to-face conversation. But the coordinating idea here with Luke is that Jesus continues to act, which is expressed in the future verb “I will do” (*poiēsō*).

But even more significant is the implication of v. 14. The construction here is a conditional sentence, which is not fully evident in the NI<sup>60</sup>V but is much clearer in the KJ<sup>61</sup>V, RS<sup>62</sup>V, NRS<sup>63</sup>V, and others. The setting is once again to be seen as referring to a pattern of prayer, and Jesus promises to act in response to prayer (“ask”). What is most intriguing is that the most likely reading of the Greek text here would have the prayer addressed not to the Father but to Jesus.

In dealing with this anomaly of praying to Jesus, some manuscripts simply omit the entire verse whether purposefully or accidentally. If it were accidental, it would be a variant of sight whereby the scribe’s eye moved accidentally from *ean* (“if”) of v. 14 to *ean* of v. 15.<sup>13640</sup> If it were purposeful, the copyist may have considered the verse to be either inconsistent with the focus of asking in v. 14 or theologically inconsistent with a church tradition concerning the one to whom prayer should be addressed. The other variant in 14:14 is merely the deleting of the Greek *me*. (“me”), which would deal with the theological idea of praying to Jesus and assume the praying is to God. Both these variants, however, are suspect. The most likely reading of the text here that can explain the presence of the other readings and has the weight of the

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<sup>59129</sup> See R. Brown, *John*, 2.634–35, who provides a helpful discussion related to the prayer texts of both the Gospel and the First Epistle of John.

<sup>60</sup>NIV New International Version

<sup>61</sup>KJV The King James Version

<sup>62</sup>RSV Revised Standard Version

<sup>63</sup>NRSV New Revised Standard Version

<sup>64130</sup> See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 244.

strongest manuscript history would be “if you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.”<sup>13651</sup> Although such a translation seems to be both a little clumsy and at variance with the way systematic theologians might wish to discuss prayer from a theocentric perspective, the style is a typical Semitic redundancy that here has been applied to asking me in my name. Such a writing style of asking God for the sake of his name is found elsewhere in the Bible (cf. Pss 25:11; 31:3), and it agrees with the Johannine idea that the Holy Spirit will be sent in the name of Jesus (cf. 14:26).<sup>13662</sup>

This meaning of the expression here of asking me in my name, as H. Bietenhard has suggested, probably means praying both “according to his will” and “with the invocation of his name.”<sup>13673</sup>

#### EXCURSUS 16: John’s Gospel on the Trinity

The fact that John can here speak of praying both to Jesus (14:14) and to the Father in Jesus’ name (cf. 15:16 and 16:23) would not likely trouble this Gospel writer because he would clearly see an intertwining of the two ideas in his thinking about God (cf. 1:1 and 20:28). The problem for Western Christians is that we usually define things by means of *distinction* whereas the Semitic mind defines things by *description* or in picture-thinking. The overlap of Jesus and God in the statements of John may trouble us, but John was apparently not troubled. Therefore the Semite had no trouble in his Trinitarian formulation of speaking of God as the one who is, was, and is to come, the Spirit as the seven spirits, and Jesus as the firstborn from the dead (Rev 1:4–5)—*and in that order*.<sup>13684</sup> But we have come to speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—*and in that order*.

There is a freedom in Johannine picture-thinking that irritates our mind-set and has led to a number of church arguments. For example, in the next section on the Holy Spirit the text of 14:16 reads, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor [Paraclete].” This text has been used by the Western church to argue that the Holy Spirit must be the *third “persona”* of the Trinity and that the Holy Spirit must have proceeded from the Father and the Son. Accordingly, the Western creed reads “and the son” (*filioque*).<sup>13695</sup> But the Eastern church has consistently argued that the *filioque* clause is totally unnecessary. The arguments over this expression have been intense with bishops deciding to excommunicate each other from their fellowships.

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<sup>65131</sup> Cf. Newman and Nida, *Translator’s Handbook*, 464.

<sup>66132</sup> Carson, *John*, 497–98 provides a perceptive note at this point which outlines the options for dealing with the variants here.

<sup>67133</sup> For a discussion of asking in the name see H. Bietenhard, *TDNT*, especially at 5.276. See also F. G. Untergassmair, *Im Namen Jesus: Der namensbegriffe im Johannesevangelium* (Stuttgart: Herder & Herder, 1973), 125–28.

<sup>68134</sup> Note also the order in 1 Pet 1:2 as Father, Spirit and Jesus.

<sup>69135</sup> For discussions concerning the *filioque* clause and Chalcedon see G. Borchert, “The Spirit and Salvation,” *CTR* 3 (1988): 73.

Although theological formulations are intensely important, one still has to wonder whether the argument was really worth it, especially since it could be argued that the pre-Chalcedonian formulation of the Trinity in Rev 1:4–5 might not fully support such precision, to say nothing of the fact that the order of the Trinitarian formulation in 1 Pet 1:2 is exactly the same as that in the opening words of Revelation.

Matthew's order of the Godhead is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (28:19), but the fact that there are different patterns in the New Testament should warn us against an absolutist approach to the subject. The reality of the Godhead is clear. Yet there is no question that the early Christians were struggling to describe the relationship between the members or *persona* of what we today call the Trinity. So we must be exceedingly careful in our theological formulations not to treat some inspired biblical statements as illegitimate because they do not fit our Western style of formulations. We must always remember that God is bigger than our formulations, and we will never pour the ocean of God's truth into the teacups of our minds or completely encapsulate truth in our neat little formulations about God. On the other hand, it should not stop us from trying to describe this divine reality as long as we maintain our humility concerning our attempts at comprehending the incomprehensible (cf. Paul at Rom 11:33–36).

**14:14 (Cont.)** Having thus introduced the intense feeling of loss by the disciples, John has in this final subsection sought to give his readers a sense of hope in the promise of the coming power that will be experienced through the believer's relationship to Jesus. But the invitation to pray for "anything" (14:14) in this context is not, in fact, to be understood as "anything" in the absolute sense because the guiding principle of the believer's prayer must be the same principle that Jesus followed throughout his life. That principle was the glorification of the Father in and through everything done by the Son (14:13). To read this promise of Jesus concerning asking in any other way would be a complete misunderstanding of the promise.

Jesus lived in the will of the Father, and the Christian is duty bound to live in the will of Jesus. Appropriate praying/asking here, therefore, must follow the same model Jesus exemplified.<sup>13706</sup> Mere reciting of the name of Jesus must not be understood as a mantra of magical power that provides the petitioner with his heart's desire. A "name" in the Semitic context carries a special sense of the nature of the name bearer. Accordingly, from Adam and Eve through Abram/Abraham to Jacob/Israel and Joshua/Jesus, names are purposive designations of important realities. So to pray in the name of Jesus implies that in the praying one recognizes the nature of the name the praying person is using.<sup>13717</sup>

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<sup>70136</sup> Cf. Paul in Phil 2:5–11, who spelled out in the well-known *kenosis* (emptying) passage the meaning of having the mind of Christ or following the model of Jesus. As he adopted this model of copying Christ, he called on his readers also to copy him (Phil 3:17). This latter idea may seem strange to us today, but Paul is hardly enamored with himself (3:7–8) because his focus is on Christ. When one's focus is "truly" on Christ, then one can invite others to copy the one who is so focused.

<sup>71137</sup> In addition to Bietenhard's article in *TDNT* referred to above, see his discussion in *DNTT*, especially at 2.654. For further discussions on the significance of names see A. Key, "The Giving of Proper Names in the Old Testament," *JBL* 83 (1964): 55–59; J. Barr,

In discussing the subject of prayer in this manner as a crucial aspect of the believer's reliance on divine power, the stage is thus set for the introduction of the next major section of the Farewell Cycle—namely, Part I of the texts related to the Paraclete, or the Holy Spirit.

### **3. The Role of the Spirit: The Divine Resource for the Community—Part I (14:15–31)<sup>13728</sup>**

As indicated in the introduction to the Farewell Cycle, John has designed this cycle in the form of a bull's-eye composed of wraparound concentric circles with chaps. 13 and 17 forming the outside ring. Then comes the prospect of Jesus' departure (14:1–14; 16:16–33), which forms the penultimate ring. The present section, 14:15–31, the first part of the inner ring dealing with the role of the Holy Spirit, comes immediately next to the center or core of the cycle.

#### **(1) *The First Spirit Statement: The Coming of the Paraclete (14:15–17)***

**<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will obey what I command”. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.**

The context of this section is clearly focused on the church and not on Christians as individuals, a common misreading of these verses. The “you” in English is plural. Moreover, these verses are not to be understood as a mere subjective personal experience of the Spirit by individuals. Nor should the emphasis fall on a “personal meaning” for the word “in” at 14:17. Further, the presence of the word “world” in this text is clearly the linguistic identification that

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“The Symbolism of Names in the Old Testament,” *BJRL* 52 (1969–70): 11–29; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:179–87 and 10–11.

<sup>72138</sup> For examples of representative perspectives on these verses see M. Carrez, “Les Promesses du Paraclet,” *EGT* 12 (1981): 323–32; G. Johnston, “The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John,” *Perspectives* 9 (1968): 29–37 and *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS 12 (Cambridge: University Press, 1970); A. Leaney, “The Johannine Paraclete and the Qumran Scrolls,” in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 38–61; F. Mussner, “Die johanneischen Parakletsprüche und die apostolische Tradition,” *BZ* 5 (1961): 56–70; J. Painter, “Farewell Discourses,” 532–34; J. Patrick, “The Promise of the Paraclete,” *BibSac* 127 (1970): 333–45; I. de la Potterie, “The Paraclete,” *BBB* 2 (1976): 120–40; F. Segovia, “The Love and Hatred of Jesus and Johannine Sectarianism,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 262–69 and *Farewell of the Word*, 93–116; and D. Wenham, “Spirit and Life: Some Reflections on Johannine Theology,” *Themelios* 6 (1980): 4–8.

the Christian community is here set over against the world.<sup>13739</sup> Accordingly, the passages must be viewed as a sociological defensive expression of the church against the world.

My personal encounter with this passage was brought to a focus in high school when a professional football player met with me and my brother and tried to convince us that while we may have had the Spirit “with” us that now we needed to experience the Spirit “in” us (14:17). Accordingly, he tried to convince us that we needed to be filled with the Spirit. I later realized that this misunderstands the community context of this passage (as well as the filling of the Spirit). Moreover, when I researched the concept of “filled with the Spirit,” I realized he had also completely misunderstood that idea as well. But I have written on that matter elsewhere.<sup>14740</sup>

According to Islam, “another Paraclete” was none other than Mohammed, the spiritual messenger of Allah, who came after Jesus.<sup>14751</sup> There is no biblical evidence, however, for this

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<sup>73139</sup> Cf. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on John*, 231.

<sup>74140</sup> See Borchert, “The Spirit and Salvation,” 70–71. Briefly, the idea of “filled with” is a particular Lukan expression that applies to such matters as fear, awe, wrath, madness, wonder, wine, indignation, or envy (Luke 4:28; 5:26; 6:11; Acts 3:10; 5:17; 13:45; 19:29). A house can be filled (Acts 2:2), and Jerusalem can be filled (5:28). People, such as John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and Zechariah, were filled with the Holy Spirit, according to Luke, before Pentecost and even prior to the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:15, 41, 67). The expression is used elsewhere *only* in Eph 5:18, and it is not used in Johannine writings. Accordingly, the idea must not be imported into John. The expression is a Lukan word picture and is hardly to be understood as an indication of the amount of the Spirit one has. It is better today to think about the Spirit controlling a person or that a person is responding to the Spirit rather than that a person has somehow been “topped off” with the Spirit.

<sup>75141</sup> The view of Islam is that Mohammed is the fulfillment of the expectation of the coming Paraclete. In “A Call to the Real Salvation” (pub. by Islamic Center of Boulder, Col., n.d.) the claim is made that “Jesus (peace be upon him) further uttered words in the Bible which supports our claim that our religion is in no way different with his when he prophesied in John 16:7–14 ‘*the helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you*’ ” And after the quotation of the Johannine text the commentary continues: “This point surely proves that Jesus’ (peace be upon him) teaching was not yet complete, that there was somebody to come to finalize the revelation. He is not Paul, the enemy of Jesus (peace be upon him), nor the holy spirit as some Christians believe or were made to believe. He is Mohammed (peace be upon him), the only true prophet who came after Jesus (peace be upon him).” In contrast to this view, the Johannine picture is not that the Paraclete would bring new revelation but would “remind you of everything I have said to you” (14:26). Of course guidance into the future would bring new insights (16:13), but the text there is clear that the Spirit (note the

view, nor would a reasonable hermeneutic lead to this conclusion. Of course, the Paraclete is *not* Mohammed.

Other illustrations could be added to those above. Accordingly, it is imperative to take seriously the context of the passage as we turn to the study of these verses.

**14:15** This section opens with the theme of love introduced in the opening chapter of the Farewell Cycle, but here it has a slightly different focus.<sup>14762</sup> In the earlier new commandment to love (13:34–35) the focus was on loving one another, as Jesus loved them. That idea will be repeated in the core section of the bull’s-eye at 15:12–13. But here the focus is shifted in the condition to loving Jesus, namely, “if you love me (*me*).” To fulfill the condition, the text specifies “you will obey [or “keep”] what I command.” Although there are several variants in the Greek at this point,<sup>14773</sup> the impact of the verse really means that obedience is a test or indication of loving Jesus. A similar connection between loving God and keeping his commands is expounded in John’s first epistle (1 John 5:2–3).

“Obey what I command (*entolas*) is not merely to be understood as obeying a series of ethical precepts or rules of morality. For John the “commands” (John 14:17, 21), “my word” (14:23–24, *logos*, the NI<sup>78</sup>V has “teaching” and “words”), and “my words” (14:24, the NI<sup>79</sup>V has “teaching”) are closely related and involve the entire scope of Jesus’ teaching and revelation (cf. 8:31; 12:47, 50; etc.). Segovia argues that the meaning is three sided, for it includes the elements of love, practical directives (though he really defines that in terms of loving one another), and “the whole of Jesus’ teaching and revelation.”<sup>14804</sup> It is perhaps sufficient to say,

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presence of the word) would glorify Jesus, not some other person. The face of Islam in North America is rather irenic and conforms to the spirit of a democratic way of life. But in other parts of the world where Islam is in control and where there are clear alliances between Islam and government, Islam is very different. Anyone who abandons Islam for Christianity will likely be found dead.

<sup>76142</sup> K. Tomoi has raised the following question: “Is not John xiv, 15 a Dislocation?” *ExpTim* 72.1 (1960): 31, but few scholars have followed his logic.

<sup>77143</sup> This verb in the UBS Gk. text is future, which is supported by a few manuscripts like Vaticanus and L. Our variant option is the aorist subjunctive, which is supported by P<sup>66</sup>,  $\chi$ , and the queen of the cursives (33). The other possibility is the use here of the imperative “keep my commands,” which is supported by Alexandrinus and the Western reading of D. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 245. Although the manuscript evidence is widely split and the reading is therefore somewhat in doubt, the future probably is correct.

<sup>78</sup>NIV New International Version

<sup>79</sup>NIV New International Version

<sup>80144</sup> Segovia, *Farewell of the Word*, 95.

however, that unlike Paul, who details specific patterns of action in his epistles, John in his Gospel leaves the definition of how one obeys Jesus as rather undefined except that the “commands,” “word,” or “words” are to be understood as modeled on the love of Jesus and his obedience to the Father (14:21; etc.). Even in his first epistle the concept of obedience is rather generally defined in terms of rejecting sin as an attachment to the devil (1 John 3:4–10), loving and caring for the brethren/community in deed and not merely in words so as not to be like Cain the murderer (3:11–18), and believing and confessing that Jesus is the Christ (4:2; 5:1; etc.). Thus, obeying Jesus’ commands in effect means to copy the example of Jesus.<sup>81</sup>

14:10–11. The proof of the union of Jesus and His Father is threefold. They should **believe** Jesus (a) because of His character (**I am in the Father** [cf. v. 20] **and ... the Father is in Me**); (b) because His words are the Father’s (**The words I say to you are not just My own** (cf. 7:16; 12:49–50; 14:24); and (c) because the miracles reveal God’s working through Him (**the Father, living in Me ... is doing His work.... believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves**; cf. 5:36). One of the key elements in John’s Gospel is the stress on the signs as gracious pointers to faith (cf. 5:36; 10:25, 38; 11:47; 12:37; 20:30–31).

14:12–14. **The apostles would not necessarily do more stupendous miracles than Jesus did (e.g., feeding 5,000) but their outreach would be greater (e.g., Peter in one sermon had 3,000**

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<sup>81</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, [John 12–21](#), vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 114–122.

converts). This was possible **because** Jesus had gone **to the Father** and had sent the Spirit. Miracles are important, but some evangelists have done **even greater things than these** by preaching the good news to many thousands of people.

**In My name** (vv. 13–14) is not a magical formula of invocation. But the prayers of believers, as Christ's representatives doing His business, will be answered. John expanded this teaching in his first epistle. He wrote, "If we ask anything according to His will ... we have what we asked of Him" (1 John 5:14–15). To **ask Me for anything in My name** means to ask according to His will (cf. "in My name" in John 15:16; 16:23–24, 26). The word "Me" is omitted in some Greek manuscripts but it is probably correct here. Prayers in the New Testament are usually addressed to God the Father, but prayer addressed to **the Son** is proper also (e.g., Stephen's prayer to the "Lord Jesus" [Acts 7:59]). The goal of answered prayers is to **bring glory to the Father**. Also bearing fruit glorifies the Father (John 15:8)<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Edwin A. Blum, "[John.](#)" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 323.