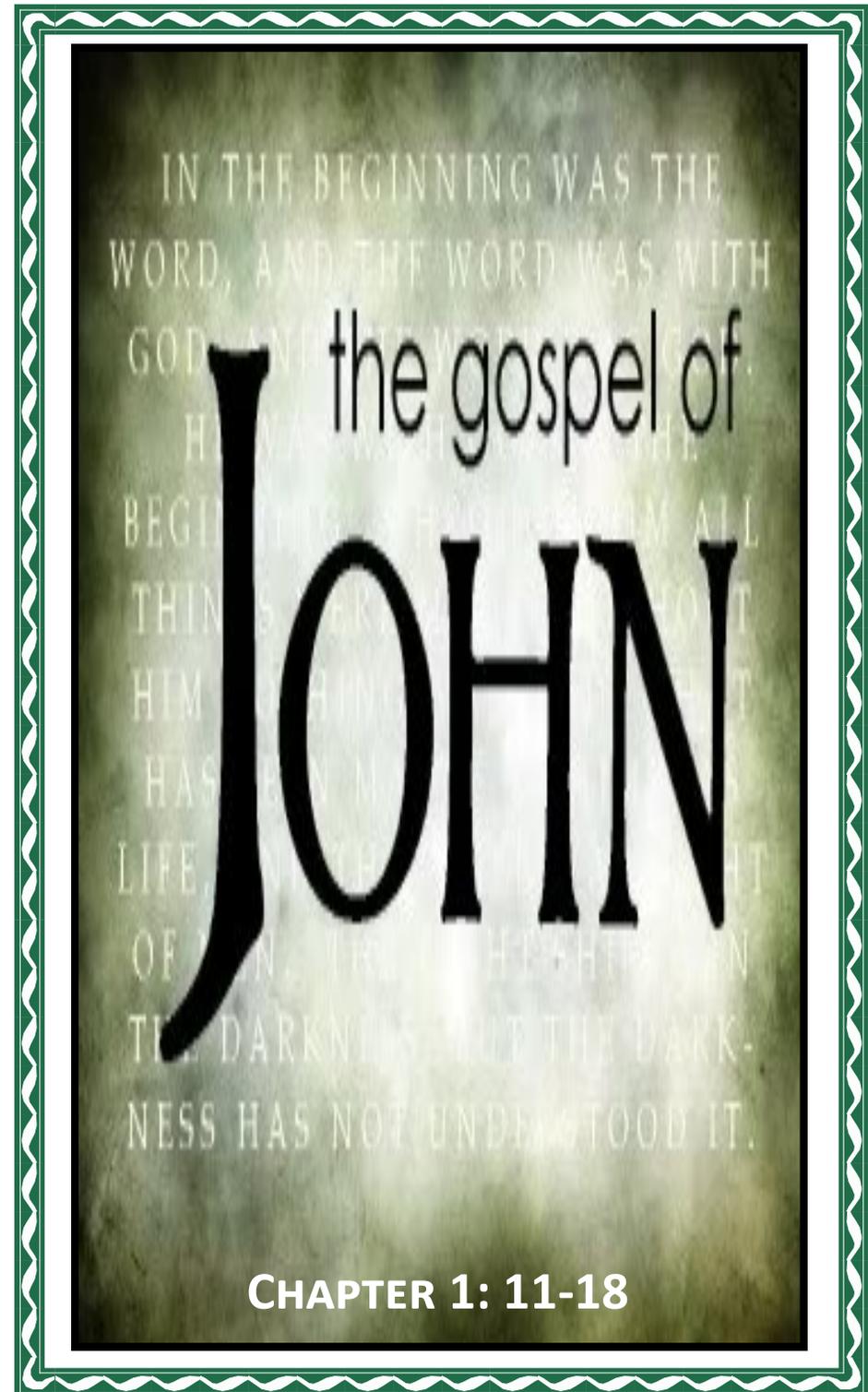




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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapse's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapse's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

### **Continuation of John 1: 11-18**

Ver. 11. —No commentary given on this verse.

Ver. 12.—But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in His name: *i.e.*, on Himself, for the name signifies the Person of Christ. The pronoun *who* must be referred, not to sons of God, but to *as many*. This is plain from the Greek *οἱ*, which is masculine, and must refer to *οσοι*, as *many*, or *whosoever*, not to *τεκνα* (*children*, or *sons*), which is neuter. The meaning is, “to as many as have received Christ, that is, to all who believe in His name, He has given power to become *sons of God*,” And so S. John explains himself (1 Ep. v. 1), “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”

*Power*, Greek, *ἐξουσίαν*, *i.e.*, *dignity, authority, right*, that indeed by this very thing, that they receive Christ by faith and by the sacrament of faith, *i.e.*, baptism, or certainly by faith formed by love, which includes the wish for, or desire of baptism,

dwelleth *in the bosom*, to him are all things plain and certain. Lest therefore when you hear, *no man knoweth the Father save the Son* (Matt. xi. 27), you should say that though He hath greater knowledge of the Father than others have, and yet knows not what His nature is, therefore the Evangelist says, ‘He is in the *bosom* of the Father.’”

There is an allusion to the words of David concerning, Christ in the 110th Psalm, “From the womb, before the morning star, have I begotten Thee” (Vulg.) That is, “From my fruitful understanding I have, as it were, as a *Wordspoken* this, and as a *Son* have I begotten thee.” S. Jerome says, “*From the womb, i.e.*, of My substance, of My nature, of the very essence of My substance, have I begotten Thee.” So also Theodoret says, “*From the womb*,” that is, “of My substance. For as human beings produce from the womb, and that which they bring forth hath the same nature as those who bring it forth, so art Thou begotten of Me, and Thou showest forth in Thyself the substance of Him who begat.” Moreover, Jerome himself translates this verse of the 110th Psalm thus, “The dew of Thy youth shall arise to Thee as it were from the womb;” Aquila, “The dew of Thy childhood arising to Thee early from the womb.” It means, “Of My Deity have I begotten Thee God:” as it is in the Creed, “God of God.” So SS. Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, and others against the Arians. For *dew* means in Hebrew the same as *flower* in English. “Dew,” says R. Solomon, “means sweetness, joyfulness, purity of heavenly generation, as it were dew born of the heavenly dayspring.”

*He hath declared*: that is, He hath clearly explained and set forth to His disciples, and through them to the whole world. The Greek is *ἐξηγήσατο*, which S. Chrysostom says means *clearly to explain secret and hidden things*, as Christ has explained to us the secrets of the Father concerning the Trinity and the Word, concerning the vocation of man, grace, resurrection, heavenly glory, and such like. “This word,” says S. Chrysostom, “sets forth more express and certain doctrine: wherefore also Christ is called the Word, and (the Angel) of great counsel.”

for us in time, for whom we are cleansed by the like faith, so that we may steadfastly contemplate Him in the things eternal.”

Ver. 18.—*No man hath seen God*, &c. He gives the reason why neither Moses, nor any one else, but Christ alone, hath taught us the perfect truth concerning God and Divine things—*because* He alone hath seen God. It is as though he said, those things of which thus far I have been speaking, concerning God and the Word, are so sublime, that inasmuch as no mortal man (and therefore not Moses), except the Son of God, hath seen God, therefore that Incarnate Son alone is able perfectly to declare these things. Thus the Fathers *passim*; who teach from this passage that Moses saw not the essence of God, but only a certain luminous substance assumed by an angel, in some manner representing to the eyes of Moses the glory of God. Thus S. Gregory says in the *Catena*: “So long as we live here in mortal flesh, God may be seen by certain manifestations or images of Him, but as He is in His own nature He cannot be seen.”

Tropologically, & Gregory teaches (*lib. 18, Mor. cap. ult. et. penult.*), that no one can behold God and Divine things, unless he first die to this world and its pleasures. For thus he expounds the words in the 18th chapter of Job, *It is hid from the eyes of the living*: “Because whoever seeth wisdom, which is God Himself, dieth wholly to this life, lest he should be holden of its love. For no man seeth It who still liveth to the flesh, because no man can at the same time embrace God and the world. For he who seeth God dieth in this respect, either in will, or in reality, for with his whole soul he is separated from the pleasures of this life.”

*The Only Begotten who is in the bosom*: Syriac, *in the lap*: S. Cyril, *in the womb*, for this is one meaning of the Greek *κόλπος*. It is a figure of speech. For by *bosom* is signified the highest possible union of the Son with the Father. It means that the Son, who is most closely united, and consubstantial with the Father, is partaker of the wisdom of the Father, and conscious of His most secret counsels. And because He knoweth them most perfectly and intimately, therefore He alone is able most fully and plainly to declare them. And so in fact He has declared them. Thus SS. Chrysostom, Cyril, and Augustine. S. Athanasius observes (*lib. 3 de Unica Trin. substant.*) that this expression, *the Only Begotten, which is in the bosom of the Father*, is made use of lest when it is said that He was made flesh, it should be supposed that He was divided from the Father. For in truth He abideth, and is with the Father, even as He was in the beginning, and everlasting.

Listen to S. Chrysostom, who by this word *bosom* thinks it is signified that the Son not only sees, but comprehends the Father. “Many,” saith he, “know God, yet none but the Only Begotten Son know of what nature His substance is. He has certain knowledge, sight, and comprehension, such as it is befitting a son to have of his father. For as the Father knoweth Me, He said, so also know I the Father, (John x. 15). Observe therefore with what fulness of language the Evangelist speaks; for when he says, *no man hath seen God at any time*, he does not go on to say, the Son who hath seen, hath declared Him, but *He who is in the bosom of the Father* hath declared Him. For he who only seeth hath not certain knowledge of the thing seen: but he who

they become at the same time justified, and they *are made* and *are* (for the Greek *γενέσθαι* means both), the adopted sons of God by participation and grace, even as Christ is the natural Son of God by His own Divine Hypostasis.

Wherefore Clement of Alexandria (*Adhort. ad Gent.*) says, that Christ by His Incarnation changed earth into heaven, and of men made angels, yea gods, and therefore that He is the beautiful charioteer who drives to heaven, to a blessed immortality, the chariot, whose two horses are the Jews and the Gentiles.

Therefore the word *ἐξουσία*, power, signifies both the dignity of the Divine adoption, and the liberty of our will freely to embrace it. For He does not say, *He made them to be sons of God*, but *He gave them power*, i.e., *free will to become sons of God*, if, that is, they will freely to believe in, and obey Him. Calvin and Beza deny this, but Augustine asserts it (*de Spirit. et Lit. c. 31*). “For,” he says, “we call this *power*, where the faculty of performing is added to the will. Wherefore every one is said to have in his power that which if he wills to do, he does, which if he wills not to do, he does not.” S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius, Bede, and others, assert the same thing continually. Hear S. Chrysostom, “Like as if fire shall touch metalliferous earth, it immediately turns it into gold, so much more does baptism make those whom it washes to be gold instead of clay. For the Holy Ghost, as it were fire, in that same hour that He enters our hearts, takes away our likeness to earth, and makes us to have a heavenly likeness new and bright, and shining as in a furnace. And why did He not say, *He made us to become the sons of God*? It was that he might show that we have need of great diligence, that we may keep pure and undefiled the mark of adoption stamped upon us by baptism. Moreover because no one is able to take away this power from us unless we shall first take it away from ourselves.

You will say, faith equally with adoption is the gift of God, therefore it cannot be at the disposal of man’s will. I reply by denying the inference. For God does not bestow faith, hope, and charity and other virtues and gifts of His upon men against their will, or as unreasoning beings, but as reasonable creatures, co-operating freely with Him. For this is what S. John here says, God has given power to become sons of God to those who freely receive Christ by faith and obedience, excluding those who are unwilling to receive Him. “Power is given that they who believe in Him may become sons of God, since this very thing is give that they may believe in Him,” says S. Augustine (*lib. 1 contr. 2. epist. Pelag. c. 3*). And this is given by God, when He so by His grace illuminates and influences the soul of man as freely herself to consent and believe.

*To become the sons of God*. How this is wrought and how great is the dignity of this adoption, I have shown on Hosea i 10, upon the words, “It

shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.” wherefore Cyril saith, “Let us rise to Our supernatural dignity through Christ,—not indeed that we should be sons of God by nature as He is, but that, through likeness to Him, we may be sons of God by grace.”

Ver. 13.—*Which were born, not of bloods* (Greek) *nor of the will* (Arabic, *appetite*) *of the flesh*, &c. S. John here gives an antithesis between human generation and Divine, and demonstrates the superiority of the latter. For (1.) he says that the former is *of bloods*, which is a Hebraism for *blood*, meaning the blood of man, produced by food. 2. He asserts that it is of the *will*, *i.e.*, the concupiscence of *the flesh*. This is what is elsewhere called *flesh and blood*, in which the will, or concupiscence of man, consists. He explains *the will of the flesh* to be *the will of man*. That is, the will, or appetite, or concupiscence of the flesh is the will, or concupiscence, for the generative act, which the carnal appetite desires.

On the other hand, the Divine generation of the sons of God is not of blood, nor of the will and concupiscence of the flesh, but is *of God*, that is, of the will, predestination, and love of God. Again, *of God* means of the Spirit and grace of God, by which the mind of man, beforetime carnal, is regenerated and justified, and so a man becomes spiritual, just, and holy, a friend, yea, a son of God.

3. *Of God*, because in this regeneration of man, God not only gives him His grace and love and all other virtues, but also Himself, that a man may be truly justified, and may have the Spirit really dwelling in his soul, yea, may have the whole Trinity, and so may become Divine, a son and heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ.

Ver.14.—*And the Word was made flesh*, &c. Thus it is literally translated in the Syriac, Persian, Egyptian, and Ethiopic versions. But the Arabic has, *The Word was made a body*. For *flesh* here means *the human body*, and *soman*. From this the heresiarch Apollinaris denied that the Word assumed a human soul and mind. He asserted that in their place were the mind and Divinity of the Divine Word. So says S. Augustine (*Hæres.* 55). For the faith teaches that the Word assumed as well true human flesh as a true reasonable soul, and therefore had two perfect and uncommingled natures, the Divine and the human, and consequently possessed two wills, and a twofold mind, the Divine and the human. So that these two natures with their attributes subsist in the one only Person of the Word, in which *Person*, but not in His *nature*, this union has taken place, as the Council of Ephesus defines against Nestorius, and the Council of Chalcedon against the Eutychians.

From this unity of Person there follows, as theologians teach, a participation of the attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*) of both natures, so that in Christ whatsoever is an attribute of man as man, the same may be predicated of His Divinity, and conversely. For example, we truly say, this Man, namely, Jesus, is God, is Almighty, is the Creator, is from eternity. And conversely we say that God, or the Son of God, truly suffered, was crucified, and died. For indeed there is one and the same Divine Person in Christ, God and man, who underwent all these things, although in accordance with two different natures. For actions and passions inhere in concrete individuals, or

Ver. 16.—*For the law was given by Moses*, &c. He gives the reason why through Christ we have received *grace for grace*. It is because Moses, who was the Jews’ greatest prophet and lawgiver, could only give a law which taught and commanded the precepts of God, but could not bestow grace to keep those commandments. Hence the need of Christ to give grace to fulfill the law. Wherefore the Arabic translates, *grace the and truth were needful through Jesus Christ*. The Evangelist therefore opposes, and prefers Christ to Moses, grace to law.

1. Because Moses in the law only taught directly what God willed the Jews to do, namely the precepts of the Decalogue, under the promise of temporal blessings, such as abundance of corn, wine and oil. But the way of salvation, remission of sins, justification, and holiness, by which we arrive at life eternal, he did not teach, much less bestow that life. But Christ hath both taught it, and hath also bestowed it, through that grace and truth which He hath brought from heaven. That is what Zacharias sings of in the first chapter of Luke, “To give knowledge of salvation unto His people for the remission of sins.” Thus too S. Chrysostom, “Grace came by Christ because with authority He forgave sins, and bestowed regeneration. Truth came by Him because He fulfilled the types and figures.”

2. In the law was a threefold commandment, the moral law, or the Decalogue; the judicial, and the ceremonial law. To the two first the Evangelist opposes *grace*, without which they could not be observed. And the effect of grace is that a believer fulfilling the same law from love of God, deserves eternal life. To the ceremonial law he opposes *truth*, because those ceremonies were types and shadows of Christ and His sacraments, which shadows Christ fulfilled, and so brought in *truth*. Wherefore S. Austin saith, “When the Law itself was fulfilled” (through Christ), “grace and truth came in. *Grace* pertains to the fullness of charity, *truth* to accomplishment of prophecy” (*cont. Faust.* c. 6).

3. Because Moses gave only an obscure and slight knowledge of God and the Holy Trinity, but Christ a knowledge that was clear and full. Wherefore Bede thus comprises the whole of what we have been saying. “Christ being made man hath declared what we ought to think concerning the truth of the Trinity, in what manner we ought to hasten to the contemplation of It, by what acts we ought to arrive at It.”

Symbolically, S. Austin (*lib. de Trin.* 13, *cap.* 19) by *grace* understands the Word Himself, incarnate in time; by *truth* the eternal vision of God, to which He leads us. This is what he says: “In things that have their origin in time, the highest grace is, that man is united to God by unity of person; but in things eternal the highest truth is rightly attributed to the Word of God. Now in that He is the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, it is brought to pass that He should be the same in the things which are done

5. Others expound, In the grace of Christ we have all received grace, and by Him have been made pleasing to God. Wherefore Paul declares constantly that we are justified and sanctified in Christ. This is a useful, but not an exact meaning, for the Greek *ἀντὶ* means *instead of*, not *in*.

6. And exactly: The Greek *ἀντὶ* has two meanings; chiefly and precisely it denotes vicarious succession, answering to the Hebrew *tachath*, *in the place*, or *room of*. “For the grace of Christ we, as it were, His sons and successors, have received like grace with Him. For as the grace of Christ made Him well-pleasing unto God, so likewise does the same grace make us pleasing unto God, and sons of God by adoption.” So SS. Chrysostom, Cyril, and others. Secondly, *ἀντὶ* is often used, though improperly, for *on account of*: “*on account of*, or, *through* the grace of Christ as a fountain, we have received grace.” It is explanatory of what precedes—and *of His fullness have all we received—by means of what follows, even grace for grace*. For grace flows down from God through Christ as our Head unto us, who are, as it were, His members, as the Apostle teaches (Eph. i.) For God has willed to appoint Christ to be, as it were, the universal fountain of grace, from whence every grace should flow down to the faithful, that we may owe everything to Christ, and render unto Him endless and infinite thanks. For the sake of Christ, who is well-pleasing and most beloved in His sight, who is also the Mediator, God has reconciled us unto Himself, and enriched us with His grace and friendship, according to the words in S. Matthew iii. 7, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;” and no man pleases Me except through Him. From hence it is plain that we receive from Christ the same grace which He has in Himself—the same, I say, in kind, not in degree, which would be, ordinarily speaking, unbecoming and impossible, though some have even maintained this. Thirdly, the word “*for*” (*ἀντὶ*) might denote a certain equality. For this is the meaning of the Greek compound *ἀντίθεος*, that is to say, the equal of God, or he who makes himself a god, as Lucifer did, and Antichrist will do. So also *antitype* (*ἰντίτυπος*), is that which is set over against and corresponds, that which is equal, and of the same form. And *the antipodes* are properly those who walk with their feet planted exactly opposite to our own. The meaning then would be—Through Christ we have received grace as it were equal to the grace of Christ, because by it we have been lifted up, and made to belong to the Divine order of things, that is to say, sons of God, and “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet. i. 4). Thus the Apostles were in some sense the fellows and peers of Christ, for He calls them His brethren. Thus the Pope calls the cardinals brethren, and so, in some sort, equals them to himself. Let a believer then, more especially a priest, or a religious, think with himself how he ought to live like Christ and lead the heavenly life which Christ led, that whosoever shall see him, or hear him, may say he has seen and heard Christ in his lively image.

Under the word *grace* here include *truth* also. For Christ is spoken of as *full of grace and truth*. And *of His fulness* of both *have we all received*. For through Christ have we received *truth*, that is, knowledge of God, faith, wisdom, understanding of salvation and things Divine: also remission of sins, reconciliation with God, the adoption of sons, charity, humility and all other virtues and gifts. All are here comprehended under the word *grace*.

persons, in whatsoever nature they subsist. Hear S. Austin (*in Dial. 65. quæst. ad Oros. qu. 4*). “The Word was made flesh, not being changed by the flesh; so that He did not cease to be what He was, but began to be what He had not been. For He assumed flesh, He did not convert Himself into flesh. By that *flesh*, as a part for the whole, we understand the whole man, that is, flesh and reasonable soul. And as the first man had died both in the flesh and in the soul, so also it behoved that he should be quickened both in flesh and in soul, through the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus”

It follows (2.) that *the Word was made flesh*, not in the way in which water became wine when it was changed into wine, nor as food becomes our flesh, when it is changed into it, nor yet again as gold becomes a statue, by the addition to the material of gold of the accidental form of a statue, but after a similar manner to that in which soul and flesh being united become one man. So S. Athanasius in the Creed. “One, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.” But man is one *essentialiter*; Christ is One *personaliter*. Or again, it is after the manner in which a man is clothed by the putting on of a garment. So a new substance was added to the Word, as it were a garment, but substantially, not accidentally: for the Son of God clothed Himself with the substance of flesh, and of our nature, and joined, and most closely united it to Himself substantially in the same Hypostasis of the Word.

*Flesh* here, as often in Scripture, signifies by *synecdoche* the whole man. *The Word was made flesh*, *i.e.*, the Son of God became man. In a similar manner, S. John might have said, *The Word of God became a soul*. But he preferred to say *flesh* rather than *soul*, that he might show how great was the kindness of God, that for love of us He emptied Himself. For God was made *flesh*, that we instead of flesh that was most corrupt through concupiscence and sin might become as it were Divine, and sons of God, and akin to God Himself, “The Word,” says S. Cyril (*epist. 8. ad Nestor.*), “uniting to Himself, according to His substance, flesh animated by a reasonable soul, was ineffably made man.”

We will now comment upon each word of this passage singly.

*And*: this word conjoins the sentence with those preceding it. It has partly an historical, partly a causative force. *Historically*—that Eternal Word, whose generation I have declared, and of whom I have said, that *He was with God*, and *was God*, was in the time divinely appointed *made flesh*, for He assumed our flesh of the Blessed Virgin, and when He was born of her was called Jesus. So that *and* in this place may stand for *therefore*. As thus, *Therefore* was the Word made flesh, that He might make us to be the sons of God. Therefore S. Augustine says, “Let us not be amazed, or astounded at such grace, and let it not seem a thing incredible to us, that

men should be born of God, when He asks you to consider that God was born of men.”

*The Word*: the Greek has the article, and is emphatic—that Divine and Eternal Word, of whom we have been thus far speaking. Wherefore S. Athanasius (*Epist. ad Epictetum*) cites Gal. iii. as a parallel passage, and says, “For as Christ is called a curse, not because He Himself was made a curse, but because for us He bore the curse, so is He said to be made flesh, not because He Himself was changed into flesh, but because He assumed flesh for us.”

*The Word was made flesh* is explained by the same parallel of a curse by S. Gregory Nazianzen (*Epist. ad Cledon.*), S. Flavian, Patriarch of Antioch, S. Ignatius, S. Irenæus, S. Hippolytus, S. Basil, S. Chrysostom, S. Gregory Nyssen, Amphilochius, and others, who are cited by Theodoret in a Dialogue entitled *Immutabilis*. In this he confutes those Eutychians who said that the Word was changed by His Incarnation, and transformed into flesh. He confutes others who said that flesh was changed into the Word, and that the Word absorbed the flesh in the same way that the sea swallows up a stream which flows into it. These he confutes in his Dialogue *Inconfusus*. He confutes a third section of the Eutychians, who said that the Godhead in Christ suffered and was crucified, in a third Dialogue called *Impassibilis*.

Lastly, listen to S. Cyril in the Council of Ephesus, “By the Word *flesh* the whole man must be understood, as in the place where it is said, ‘All flesh shall see the salvation of God,’ and ‘I communed not with flesh and blood’ (Gal. i.). *Soul* is understood in similar way, as ‘Seventy-five souls of our fathers went down into Egypt’ (Acts vii.). As often therefore as we hear that *the Word was made flesh*, we understand that He became a man of flesh and blood.” S. Cyril elsewhere repeats this, and adds, “Not according to transference, or conversion, or commutation, as though there were a transformation into the nature of flesh, nor as having commingling, nor consubstantiation, &c.”

*Flesh, i.e., man*. To the *Word* he opposes *flesh*, as it were the lowest to the highest, what is wretched to what is blessed, what is most vile, weak, and impure, to what is most glorious. For what is more vile, weak, and filthy than human flesh? And yet the Word of God deigned to stoop to such flesh as this, from love of us. This is that *φιλανθρώπια* and ecstasy of love which the Apostle celebrates (Titus iii. 4). Hear S. Bernard (Serm. 3. *de Nativ.*): “Forasmuch as He was in the beginning with God, He dwelt in the unapproachable light, and none could comprehend Him. For ‘who hath found out the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?’ ‘The carnal mind perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,’ but now even the carnal man may receive them, because *the Word has been made flesh*. O man who art in the flesh, to thee is manifested that wisdom which afore was hid. Behold, now is it drawn forth from its hiding-place, and introduces itself into the very senses of thy flesh. After a fleshly manner, that I may so say, is it preached unto thee. Flee from voluptuousness, for death has been placed beside the gate of pleasure.”

*The Word then was made flesh, i.e., man*, as subsisting (*existentem*), not as a person

received. For Enoch, Noab, Moses, and all the rest of the prophets and patriarchs, have been sanctified and saved by the a foreseen merits of Christ. Origen and Theophylact think that these are a continuation of the words of John the Baptist; but SS. Chrysostom, Cyril, and others better take them as the words of S. John the Evangelist, confirming the preceding words of the Baptist.

*Of His fullness: i.e., of Him who is most full*. For Christ as the Head of the Church sheds abroad upon all the faithful, who are His members, not the whole fullness of His grace, but a portion thereof according to His will. “The saints,” says Bede, “receive not the fullness of His Spirit, but of His fullness what He giveth.” “For from the fullness of the Son,” says S. Cyril, “as a perpetual fountain, the gifts of grace flow out abroad to each soul that is worthy of them.” This is what the Apostle says, “He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,” *i.e., by “Christ,”* (Eph. 1.) “For He is the fountain and the root of all good,” says S. Chrysostom; “He is life, He is light, He is truth, not keeping in Himself the riches of His goodness, but diffusing them to all, and when He bath diffused them remaining full. Neither is there any diminution in Him of that which He supplies to others, but He ever bestows His riches yet more abundantly; and when He has imparted to all He still abides in the same perfectness.”

*And grace for grace*: Greek, *χάριτι ἀντὶ χάριτος*, where *ἀντὶ*, *for*, is the same as *instead of*. First some expound thus, *grace for grace*, *i.e., grace upon grace*, or, all grace have we received from Christ. As it might be said in Hebrew, *chen al chen*. But this would require *ἐπί* instead of *ἀντὶ* in the Greek. Johannes Alba, however, defends this interpretation. *Grace for grace*, he says, means copious and superabundant grace. He quotes the Hebrew expressions in the Prophets, *stroke upon stroke*, for a very great stroke, or plague: and *Job’s skin for skin, i.e., skin upon skin*, meaning all a man’s flocks and herds, skin after skin, will he give for his life. Suarez takes the same view: *Grace for grace, i.e., second grace instead of first grace*. That is to say, we all, not men only, but angels, have received increasing grace.

2. Maldonatus, *grace for grace; i.e., one man has received one grace or favour; another, instead of it, another grace*. But this does not suit the meaning of the Greek *ἀντὶ*, which signifies *succession*, not *distribution*.

3. S. Austin says, we receive the grace of life eternal, that is, beatific glory, here in hope, and after death in reality, instead of the grace of this life. For, on the one hand, grace is the seed of glory; and on the other hand, glory is the consummation of grace.

4. Others say, we have received from Christ the evangelical instead of the ancient Law. For each is grace, because given gratis by God. So S. Cyril, Chrysostom, Jansen, &c.

*And truth.* A symbol of the union of *grace and truth* is found in the breastplate of the high priest Aaron, which bore the inscription of *Urim* and *Thummim*, that is, *doctrines* and *truth*, or, literally, *illumination* and *perfection*, that is, *truth and grace*. These two superabounded in Christ, and are especially needful for every priest that he may be like Christ.

Therefore although the Blessed Virgin, S. Stephen, and other saints are said to be *full of grace* above other men, yet in respect of Christ were they not full. For Christ is, as it were, an ocean flowing out in rivers of grace to all the faithful, to apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins. As the Apostle says (Col. ii. 9), “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And again, “To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. iv. 7), and “To the Son God hath not given the Spirit by measure.”

Ver. 15.—*John bears witness*, &c. He proves what he had said concerning the Word Incarnate, and that He was full of grace and truth, by the irrefragable testimony of John the Baptist. For him the Jews accounted as a prophet and divine. It is as if he said, “Not only have we seen Jesus Christ full of grace and truth, but John, who was sent from God, openly and plainly has testified the same concerning Him.”

*And crieth:* the Greek is, *ἐκζαγε*, i.e., *cried out*. For he himself was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness* (Isa. xl. 23). “Whom not I myself alone have heard,” says S. Cyril, “but far and wide among all hath his cry come. For it was not in secret, nor with low and stammering accents, but louder than a trumpet.” As S. Chrysostom says, “Freely and confidently, casting away fear, he preached the advent of God.”

*This was He of whom I spake:* see verses 27 and 30. It means, “Before John had seen and known Christ, he said, that He was about to come to save man. And when he had seen Him, he repeated and confirmed it.” As Theophylact says, “Lest he should seem to please merely the person of Jesus, in speaking in too much praise of Him, he saith, *of whom I spake*, that is, even before I had seen Him.”

*He who cometh, i.e.,* who is about to preach, says S. Chrysostom, *after me, was before me*. That is, He is preferred in honour before me, because He was the destined Redeemer of the world. As Bede says, “not in order of time, but of dignity.” And S. Augustine, “He was not made before I was made” (for John was born six months before Christ), but He was placed before me.”

*For He was before me:* for since Jesus is true God, He was from eternity. So SS. Augustine and Chrysostom. Again, *before* means, *greater by nature, more worthy in majesty*. S. Chrysostom remarks, “John does not say, Christ, by making advance in grace and virtue, hath surpassed me; but *He was before me, i.e.,* ‘He was always my superior, always more glorious than I,’” as Cyril adds, because He was very God.”

*And of His fullness,* &c. He follows up and unfolds what he had said in the fourteenth verse that the Word Incarnate *was full of grace and truth:* for of this plenitude of grace and truth have all we, apostles and Christians, yea, all the faithful before Christ,

(*subsistentem*). For He assumed the very nature of man, but not the person of a man. Nor indeed was the Person of the Word made the person of a man, for this were impossible. The Word assumed the essence and substance of man, not human personality. A human nature was assumed by Him in that very moment of time in which it was formed by the Holy Ghost, who came *first* that it, namely, the humanity, should not subsist as a person; and He conjoined the same human nature to Himself in the unity of His Divine Person, and made it to subsist in the same. Wherefore the Humanity of Christ subsists not in itself, but in the Person of the Word.

*Was made:* not that the Word was changed into flesh, or flesh into the Word, for, as S. Chrysostom says, “far from that immortal nature is transmutation.” For how could flesh become God, that is, how could the creature become the Creator? Neither does it mean that *the Word was made flesh*, that is, became a man, in such a sense that He assumed not only human nature, but a human person, as Nestorius thought. “It is not as if,” says Theophylact, “the Word had found a man endued with virtues, and united him to Himself,” as the Holy Ghost united Himself to the prophets, the angel Raphael to Tobias. But it is that He united *the nature of man* to His own Hypostasis, and caused that the man Jesus should subsist in the same Hypostasis as God the Word, God the Son. Moreover, *the Word was made flesh*, not in imagination, nor appearance, nor fancy, as the Manichæans maintained, but in the very truth and reality of actual fact. *The Word was made man*, I say, not by Himself alone, but by the whole Trinity. For all the Holy Trinity way the efficient cause of the Incarnation of the Word, but still in such a manner that the Hypostatic Union was with the sole Person of the Word, not with that of the Father, or the Holy Ghost: and the Son alone became man. “For the Trinity itself made the Word only to be flesh,” says S. Fulgentius (*lib. de fide ad Petr.*)

The Word therefore clothed with flesh was as the sun vested with a cloud, or as fire burning iron, or as a burning coal, as S. Cyril says. Wherefore its type and symbol is a carbuncle, as I have said on Apoc. xxi. 29. Again, it was like unto a pearl in a shell, or as lightning in a cloud, or as gold in a furnace, or an angel in a body. Moreover S. Augustine says (*lib. 15. de Trin. c. 11*), “As our speech becomes a voice, and yet is not changed into a voice, so the Word of God being made flesh was not changed into flesh.”

I have said more on the subject of the Incarnation in the first chapter of S. John’s Epistle. Among other things I have shown that it was with this end and object in view, that the Word which before, as God, was our Father, might become, as it were, our Mother, through the Humanity which He assumed. And I added from Damascene, that God assumed human nature, that He might unite the whole world to Himself by it, and, as it were, make it godlike.

*And dwelt among us:* Greek, *ἐσκήνωσεν*, i.e., *tabernacle* amongst us for a

short time, like a guest and a foreigner in a strange land. For He was a citizen and an inhabitant, and the Lord of Heaven and Paradise. As it is said in Jeremiah (xiv. 8), “Wherefore wilt thou be as a sojourner in the land, and as a wayfarer turning aside to lodge?” Christ therefore wished to teach us by His own example that this world is, as it were, a guest-house, but that heaven is our country, which we ought to strive to attain, despising earthly things.

SS. Chrysostom and Cyril explain a little differently. *Among us*, i.e., *in us*, in our nature, namely, in the Humanity which He assumed, that He might redeem us. S. Chrysostom gives the reason. “The Word constructed a holy temple for Himself, and by means of it introduced from heaven a way in which we should spend our life.”

*And we have seen His glory*: Greek, *ἐθεασάμεθα*, *we have gazed upon*, as on a new and wonderful spectacle in a theatre, that the Word veiled in flesh might indeed show us the glory of His Godhead by means of miracles and Divine wisdom. Thus the Apostle says (1 Cor. iv. 9), “We were made a spectacle (Greek, *a theatre*) to the world, to angels and to men.” Listen to S. Austin, “By that His nativity He made an eye-salve, whereby the eyes of our heart might be cleansed. No man could see His glory unless he would be healed by the humility of the flesh. Flesh had blinded thee: flesh healeth thee. Thus cometh the physician that by the flesh He may heal the vices of the flesh.”

*The glory as of the only Begotten*. The meaning is, we have seen the glory of Christ, being such and so great as became the Only Begotten Son: or that it was such as might manifest Him to be the Only Begotten Son of God. For to Him, as S. Basil says, hath God the Father given all His glory, all His substance, as parents are wont to leave all their inheritance to an only begotten son. This glory of Christ did S. John with his fellows behold in the Transfiguration upon Mount Tabor, in His glorious Resurrection, in His Ascension, and in His Divine life and miracles. Therefore the word *as* here denotes not similitude, but reality. So S. Chrysostom says, “The word *as* in this place is an expression not of similarity, but of confirmation, and certain definition.” And Theophylact says, “We behold His glory, not such as that which Moses had, nor glory such as that with which the cherubim and seraphim appeared to the prophet, but glory such as that which became the Only Begotten of the Father, the glory which appertains to Him by His nature.”

Moreover, the glory of the Godhead of Christ shone through the flesh which He assumed, as through a veil, as Euthymius says, who further adds, “What was that grace of the Word? Surely it was the performance of miracles such as had never been beheld before: it was His bright and supernatural Transfiguration, the preternatural darkening of the sun at the time of His Passion, the fearful rending of the veil, the terrible earthquake, the rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, the raising of the dead, and that which is the chief of all, wonderful beyond speech or thought, the Resurrection of the Lord.”

*Of the Father*. This is added, saith S. Bernard, “because Christ hath brought to us from the Father’s heart everything that is paternal, that fear itself might perceive nothing

in the Son of God but what is sweet and fatherly towards the human race.” More loftily, and more literally, says St. Cyril, “That supernatural grace is ever firm and immutable, ever the same, ever equally full of its own dignity. Wherefore, although the Word was made flesh, He was not overcome by the infirmity of the flesh, nor did He fall from His ancient majesty and omnipotence, because He became man. For we saw, he says, the glory of Christ from God, more lofty than the glory of creatures, that every one who is in possession of his senses might confess that it could belong to no other than to the Only Begotten Son of God.”

*Full of grace and truth*. Erasmus and Cajetan join these words to what follows, and refer them to John the Baptist. They connect and translate as follows, *John being full of grace and truth bears witness of Him*, namely, of Jesus, that He is the Christ. They support their view by saying that the Greek for *full* is *πλήρης* in the nominative masculine. But this pointing and translation is opposed to all the Fathers, and the perpetual consent of the Church, contrary, too, to the pointing of the Greek, Latin, Syriac and Arabic versions, which place a full stop after *truth*. It is moreover inconsistent with what follows, for John, explaining *how* Christ was *full of grace and truth*, subjoins, *of His fulness have all we received*. The Greek for *full* being in the nominative, is inconclusive, as well because many MSS. have *πλήρη* in the accusative, and others have *πλήρη* in the margin, as also because the preceding words, *And we have seen His glory, the glory &c.*, should be read as in a parenthesis. For *πλήρης*, the nominative refers to *λόγος*, meaning, *the Word was made flesh, being full of grace and truth*. There is a reference to human speech, the greatest commendation of which is, when it is *gracious and true*. So also the Divine Word, not merely as He is in Himself, but also as He became flesh, carried with Him most excellent grace, as it were in a fountainhead, and was most abundantly endowed by God with every gift of grace, both in word and deed, according as it was said, “And all marvelled at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke iv. 22.). The same Word made flesh was full of *truth* also, because He was exposed all errors, and banished the shadows of the Old Law, and brought to light the very truth itself which was promised by the prophets. “In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. ii. 5).

*Full of grace*: “For we have not seen the glory of power or splendour,” says S. Bernard, “but the glory of paternal kindness,” the glory of grace, of which the Apostle saith, “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1.).

Wherefore the Apostle exclaims, (1 Tim. iii. 16), “Great is the mystery of piety” (namely, *the Word made flesh*), “which was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, appeared unto angels, was preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” For how full and altogether perfect was the grace of Christ, see the teaching of S. Thomas (3 p. q. 7.art. 9 et seq.)