

ple that Jesus loved," the apostle of Love and contemplation. Such a view of the Lord Jesus as this was not possible in the days of His flesh, but it was only when the wonderful life was viewed and reviewed in the light of a fuller illumination that its deep significance was grasped. These fourteen verses are a general introduction to the whole Gospel, they suggest the highest and most central truths of the Christian faith.

I.—The Divine Word, 1-5. Here we are taught the eternal existence of the Word. He shares the divine nature, He is "at home with God," He was concerned in the Creation, through Him God is revealed. A great word reveals a thought or truth, embodies it and communicates it. In a sense far deeper than we can fathom, Jesus is the Word of God which abideth for ever. "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." In this we have declared the relation of Our Lord to God and man. He was always related to God, lived in closest fellowship with the Father. And this reference to creation shows that His relationship to humanity did not begin simply with the Bethlehem birth. Because there was in Him life, the deepest, divine life, and the purest human life. He was the light of the world, the light and life of men. But this light shined in the darkness of this wayward world, and the darkness comprehended it not, that is, did not lay hold of, or appropriate it. This last tragic fact is more clearly stated and more fully developed in the next paragraph. This is a characteristic of St. John's style, to state a truth briefly and suggestively, and then to resume it and carry it forward to further illustration.

II.—The Divine Word Revealed and Rejected, 6-9. Now a subordinate person is brought forward, a man who "came into being" and who was sent by God. The name of this man was John. There is a deep distinction between this good heroic man and the highest man, though he was divinely commissioned. He was not the light, but was sent as a martyr or witness-bearer, to make known to men that the light was drawing near. John was a brilliantly burning lamp (v. 35), but Jesus is the absolutely genuine light. Therefore the great statement is made concerning Him that He lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is not a small, sectarian Christ, but the world's true, universal light. That would, in a sense, have been true if He had not come into the world. But He came into the world that had its being through Him, and the world did not know. To His own He came, and His own did not receive Him. We have passed now from creation to the cross.

Christ the Saviour, 12-14. To the faithful ones who received Him He gave authority to become children of the living God, so that looking up to the Father of Jesus Christ they could say, in lowly confidence, "Our Father." This

is not a thing of human lineage, it does not belong to the fleshly sphere, and does not depend upon man's will, it is a birth from God. This process is spiritual in its origin and its effects. There is the revelation of Jesus to the soul, and the revelation of God in Him. There is the response of faith and the gift of the Child-spirit. This spirit the world can neither give nor take away, it is the Christ's peculiar gift, and the disciples peculiar possession. Those who received it were able to say, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we gazed upon His glory, a glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Note the various aspects of the manifold revelation. It is a revelation of the Father through the Word, who shares His nature. The Word is revealed in the creature, in the consciences of men, in the witness of prophets, in the lowly human form which enshrines the divine, in the lives of those who through Him have gained a new birth, and received the gift of eternal life. As we view this manifold truth we know that the words "Let there be light" have been spoken again, with a richer meaning. Seeing it is God that said "Light shall shine out of darkness," who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

A New Year's Wish.

Numbers iv. 24.

The Lord bless thee!
How shall He bless thee?
With the gladness that knoweth no decay,
With the riches that cannot pass away,
With the sunshine that makes an endless day—
Thus may He bless thee.
And keep thee!
How shall He keep thee?
With the all-covering shadow of His wings,
With the strong love that guards from evil things,
With the sure power that safe to glory brings—
Thus may He keep thee.

The Call of the First Disciples.*

Here the ministry of John and the ministry of the Lord Jesus touch each other; John, who was "a burning and shining lamp," bore testimony to, and prepared the way for, the true universal light. One of John's noblest sayings was, "He must increase, but I must decrease." There was in that word not only recognition of the truth, but heroic submission, and self-sacrifice. This lesson is so rich in suggestions that even a few words of it would be sufficient for an extended exposition. We must then make an effort to summarize its wonderful teaching.

I.—The Beginning of Discipleship, 35-39. The beginning of life is always interesting, as spring-time in nature, childhood in human experience; how much more then in the spiritual sphere!

Lesson for Jan. 8th. John 1: 35-46.

Here we have the beginning of the Christian church. The desire for the discipleship was awakened by beholding the Christ. The testimony of John was powerful, but it was co-incident with the vision of the Christ. We must further remember that these men were in the preparatory school of John's ministry, the ministry of repentance. They were also in an expectant mood, on the look out for the coming Christ. Out of all this there came practical movement, they followed Jesus. The desire for discipleship was encouraged by the kindness of Jesus. How will he receive them? Will he frown them back into their old life or beckon them onward to a higher? Note, then, the kindly enquiry, "What seek ye?" A question not for his information but to draw forth their opening life, and when it has evoked the earnest question "Master, where dwellest thou?" there comes the kindly invitation, "Come and See." The Christ came to reveal Himself, and to the seekers, according to their capacity and need, there is given this tender invitation, "Come and See." Finally the desire for discipleship was confirmed by communion with the Christ. They abode with Him that day, and though there might seem to be little change in them, that fateful hour was really for them the beginning of a new career. Discipleship would merge into apostleship, the learners would receive the power to teach.

II.—The first service of a Christian Disciple, 40-42. This first missionary effort began at home. The silent Andrew was the means of bringing the impulsive, energetic Peter to Christ. Note his equipment for this service; he had found the Christ; that which to others was an uncertainty, and a desire, was to him an accomplished fact, hence his power to speak with the accent of conviction. The simple service of calling the brother must have behind it that sublime experience. The man that is brought to Jesus receives a great revelation. The revelation of the old and new name. There is made known to Simon the son of Jonas what he is and what he shall be. The fickle, impulsive Simon shall become Peter (Cephas) the man of rock-like character. This is prophecy by one who had power to make it true. Many inward spiritual processes, and much outward discipline is implied, but the word of Christ shall not fail. Simon is a type of the power of Jesus to reveal to us our real self and create in us a nobler self. All the great saints have received this revelation, when for the first time they stood face to face with the Christ.

III.—The Christ's peculiar call, "Follow Me." This is one of the great words of the Master. He, the lowliest man, sets forth His own personality, as the source of our salvation. To do this He "finds men," finds them when they are lost in the crowd, or in conventionalities. He sets the soul apart and speaks