

comprehends the remaining four verses. It seems strange that any one should ever doubt the extension of the conversation to the end of the twenty-first verse. The beginning and the end are clearly marked. The introduction narrates that there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night; and the conclusion is marked by the resumption of the evangelist's narrative at the twenty-second verse: "After these things, came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea," the region lying south of Jerusalem. But the best evidence of the extent of the conversation is its own structure and import. The first part teaches us that true religion is new life originating in a new birth—the birth of the Holy Spirit; the second part teaches us that this new life is the fruit of death—the death of the Son of man; the third part teaches us that this fruitful death is the gift of love—the love of the Father; and the fourth part teaches us that this gift of love is the choice of man—the choice of man by faith. "All are but parts of one stupendous whole." The several parts are closely connected, and evince such consecutiveness, independence and unity as to compel the conviction that they form one divine and glorious whole, worthy of Him who spake as never man spake, and fraught with grace and truth to all that rightly read and learn.

Such a conversation, endlessly multiplied in speech and writing over the world and down through the ages, could not be unproductive. It appears to have been profitable, first of all, to Nicodemus. The profit does not appear in the conversation itself (for profit is not always immediate), but in subsequent acts, which the evangelist significantly links with the nightly interview. When the Pharisees scoffed at their own officers, as "deceived," for eulogizing Jesus instead of seizing him, and at the multitude that followed him as "cursed," "he that came to Jesus by night" said to his fellow-Pharisees, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?"\* This was speaking manfully for fair play. When Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, obtained from Pilate the body of Jesus, "there came also Nicodemus, who at the first came

\* John vii. 50, 51.