

The Incorporation,

Preparation, Enlargement, and Manifestation of the Father's House in John 14

by John Pester

A troubled heart. It is the common lot, the bane, of fallen humanity. Our heart is troubled by the fragility of the human bonds that buttress us from the forces of a turbulent world that lies in the hands of the evil one, it is troubled by ignorance of the revealed mystery of the person and purpose of the One in whom the ruler of this world has nothing, and it is troubled by thoughts of separation and isolation from both God and our fellow human beings, for which there is no lasting comfort or peace. This is indeed the common lot of fallen humanity, but it is not the lot of humanity that has been redeemed by the going of Jesus into death and the coming of Jesus in resurrection as the Spirit of reality, who guides the redeemed into the reality that He has prepared, which is Himself as the enlarged dwelling place of God and man, the Father's house.

The Father's house is not heaven.¹ It is the Son who is eternally incorporated with the Father in His divinity, it is the Son who has passed through the process of death and resurrection, which has brought the element of His perfect humanity into the divine incorporation of the Triune God, and it is the Son who has been enlarged by opening a way for redeemed humanity to be brought into the same divine incorporation of the Triune God. Further, the many abodes in the Father's house are not individually prepared physical mansions in heaven;² they are the believers who have been incorporated into the Son as the Father's house by the coming of the Spirit of reality with the Father, making the believers a divine and mystical abode of the Triune God. The Father's house is a present reality, the enlarged reality of the believers' oneness with the Triune God, accomplished through Christ's work of bringing redeemed and resurrected humanity into the Triune God. This is what the Lord accomplished when He breathed Himself as the Spirit into the disciples on the day of His resurrection (John 20:22). This is the understanding that the Spirit brought to the remembrance of the apostles in the day of

the Lord's resurrection (2:22), and this is what the apostle John wrote of in chapter 14 of his Gospel. Ultimately, this is what the believers must see in order for the Father and the Son to come to us and make an abode with us by bringing us into the oneness of the Father's house through the process of divine incorporation.

The Divine Incorporation

In the eternal Godhead, the essential Trinity, the three of the Trinity mutually indwell one another: The Son is in the Father in the fellowship of the Spirit, and the Father is in the Son in the fellowship of the Spirit. In this divine fellowship there is an eternal co-existence and eternal co-inherence that can be described as an incorporation involving life, nature, and persons, in which the actions of one in the divine life, according to the divine nature, manifest the operations of the other two divine persons.³ This incorporation reflects the axiomatic reality that there is distinction but not separation in the Triune God. The economy of the Divine Trinity further reveals that the experience of incorporation was never intended to be limited to the eternal Godhead alone. The love of God, which is manifested in the sending of God (Rom. 8:3; John 3:16; 14:26), the dispensing of God, precludes this limitation. It is God's desire to enlarge the sphere of His incorporation to include humanity, that is, to include those who were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). "This was in eternity past. Before He created us, God chose us according to His infinite foresight. This implies that the world, which is the universe, was founded for man's existence to fulfill God's eternal purpose" (Recovery Version, v. 4, note 2).

Even the fall of humanity could not deter the desire of the Triune God for an enlarged and glorious expression of His incorporate Being. And so in time, through the incarnation of the Son, the divine incorporation was

enlarged to include the perfect humanity created by God, which was manifested in the One who committed no sin and in whom the ruler of this world had no part, Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:22; John 14:30). Then through the death and resurrection of the Son a place was prepared in the Son, as the Father's house, for the believers, the members of the Body of Christ, who through faith are joined to the redeeming and resurrected Christ. Through His going into death and His coming in resurrection as the Spirit, the Son has received us to Himself and brought us to the place where He is, that is, in the Father. This is the focus of John 14. Through the believers' economical incorporation into the Son, the many abodes in the Father's house have become an enlarged expression of the Father's house, which is a present reality that is manifested in an incorporated oneness of the believers with one another and with the Triune God.

Although the foundation of the believers' economical experience of incorporation flows from and is patterned according to the axiomatic incorporation within the eternal Godhead, we are given only brief glimpses of this essential reality in the Bible, because the overarching intention of the divine revelation is to enlighten the eyes of our heart that we would know the hope of *our* eternal calling (Eph. 1:17-18). The main focus of the revelation in the Bible, consequently, is not centered on inner trinitarian relationships within the Godhead, but on the relationship between the Trinity and redeemed and regenerated humanity. Consequently, depictions of the incorporate actions within the essential Trinity are not commonly featured in the Bible. However, when we are given a glimpse of these operations, we should not misunderstand or gloss over the significance of what is unveiled.⁴ When we read, for example, that the Triune God, following a conference within the Godhead, declared, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26), we should have a deep realization of the purpose and place of humanity in the economy of God, especially when we subsequently learn that Christ is the image of the invisible God. In the creation of humanity, human bodies were prepared to contain and express the fullness of the Godhead (Heb. 10:5; Col. 2:9), first as the tabernacle of God in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ, and second as the enlarged temple of God, the Body of Christ, the church.

When we read John 14, we should also have a realization that we are being given a rare glimpse into the incorporate operations within the essential Trinity, because much of what is spoken by the Lord in John 14 is based upon the axiomatic incorporation of Father, Son, and Spirit within the essential Trinity. Nevertheless, the apostle John presents this limited unveiling for the purpose of enlightening

us, the believers, concerning our economical incorporation into the Father's house.

John 14 is a chapter on incorporation because it is a chapter devoted to the Father's house, which is a matter of incorporation. Consequently, the Lord's word in this chapter reveals many levels of incorporation. Since the believers' incorporation fundamentally reflects the axiomatic incorporation of the essential Trinity, there are references to incorporation in the essential Godhead. Since the believers' incorporation ultimately organically duplicates the pattern set forth in the Lord's life and work in His human living, there are references to incorporation in the stage of Christ's incarnation. Since the believers' incorporation manifests the operation of the Spirit of reality, there are references to incorporation in the Body of Christ, which was produced through the resurrection of Christ as the Spirit and energized by His coming as another Comforter. And since the believers' incorporation into the Son as the Father's house is the very goal of this chapter, there are clear references to this reality.

When we read John 14, we should have a realization that we are being given a rare glimpse into the incorporate operations within the essential Trinity, because much of what is spoken by the Lord in John 14 is based upon the axiomatic incorporation of Father, Son, and Spirit within the essential Trinity.

The Lord's references to incorporation within the essential Trinity underscore the reality that the oneness inherent in the Triune God is the base and source of the believers' oneness with the Triune God. There are allusions to this essential incorporation in verses 3, 6, 7, 27, and 31. In verse 3 the Lord spoke of where He is, saying, "Where I am you also may be." By virtue of His essential coinherence with the Father, the Lord is in the Father. *Where I am*, therefore, is more than a reference to the mutual coinherence of Father and Son in the stage of incarnation. It goes back further to the reality of incorporation within the essential Trinity. The Lord, however, revealed this matter only in order to show that our incorporation with the Triune God will be the same in essence by virtue of our being in Him. Consequently, at the end of verse 3 He added the phrase *you also may be*.

In verses 6 and 7, when the Lord spoke to Thomas, saying, "I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also," He was speaking of more than the path to salvation; that is,

of a person's need to accept the Lord in order to be saved, which is the typical application of these verses. He was alluding to His dynamic and organic relationship with the Father by the Spirit within the essential Trinity, because it is this relationship that makes our organic identification with the Triune God possible. The Father, who is the source of life, has given all that He is to the Son (16:15; 17:2), making the Son the essential means, the way, for the expression of their organic reality, which is realized in the fellowship of the Spirit. It is impossible to come to the Father without coming first to the Son, and if we truly know the Son, we will know the Father, because our knowing will be based on our realization of their essential organic identity. The Lord, however, only revealed this matter in order to show the disciples that the experience of incorporation involves their economic realization of Him as the way, the reality, and the life because what He is essentially will be imparted to them economically, and so He uttered the subsequent phrase *no one comes to the Father except through Me*.

In verses 27 and 31 of John 14 the Lord revealed two of the central characteristics of incorporation in the essential Trinity—peace and love. In verse 27 He said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you,” and in verse 31 He said, “This is so that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded Me, so I do.” The peace that the Lord leaves with and gives to the believers is the peace, the oneness, that is inherent within the incorporation that is the essential Trinity. The God who is one is the God of peace, and the peace that the Lord spoke of in verse 27 is not a temporal peace, an emotional sentiment; it is the eternal condition of oneness within the Divine Trinity. The Lord, nevertheless, spoke only of this essential condition of peace in order to enlighten the disciples with the understanding that their experience of incorporation will consist of the same inherent oneness. The peace that He gives is “My peace.” Only this peace can truly comfort troubled hearts. This peace, as a reflection of the oneness in the essential Trinity, is sustained by the mutuality of divine love within the essential Trinity. Consequently, the love of the Son for the Father that is known by the world is the love that is eternally present in and expressed through the incorporation of the Divine Trinity. The Lord spoke of this essential condition of love in order to show the disciples that they will know the love that causes the Father and Son to come and make an abode with them (v. 23).

The Lord's references to incorporation in His person and work in the stage of incarnation underscore the reality that the believers' incorporation duplicates the pattern set forth in the Lord's life and work in His human living. There are references to the Lord's manifestation of the divine incorporation in verses 4, 7, 9 through 11, 17, 28 and 29. In verse 4 the Lord assured the disciples that they

knew the way to the Father because He had manifested the way of incorporation during His time with them on earth, truthfully asserting that they knew the Father and had seen the Father in Him (v. 7). Verses 9 through 11 clearly reveal the divine incorporation in operation in the person of Christ during His human living on earth: To see the Lord is to see the Father, to hear the Lord is to hear the Father, and to witness the works of the Lord is to witness the works of the abiding Father. The purpose of the Lord's manifestation of the divine incorporation is that we would enter into this incorporation by believing (v. 12). Although verse 17 refers to the believers' incorporation following the resurrection, which was accomplished by the coming of the Spirit of reality, it speaks more about the manifestation of the divine incorporation during the human living of Jesus in order to confirm that the Spirit, who would be in the disciples, was the Lord who was abiding with them.

When the Lord was living on the earth, the Spirit was not separate from the Son. During this time, however, the incorporation of the Son with the Father by the Spirit was apart from the disciples. The incorporation was only with them, but not in them. However, the Lord wanted the disciples to know that when He became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection, the Spirit of reality would manifest the operations of the Son with the Father in the disciples, eliminating the separation between God and humanity but not the distinction. In verses 28 and 29 the Lord spoke of going away to the Father and coming again to the believers. Although these verses refer to the incorporation of the believers and the Son following His death and resurrection, they more specifically refer to the work of the Son in the stage of His incarnation in relation to the incorporation of His humanity into the Divine Trinity. In the essential Trinity the Son is with the Father, even in the Father, and in the stage of incarnation the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son by virtue of His divinity. But in order for redeemed humanity to be brought into the divine incorporation, there is a need for the Lord in His perfect humanity to be brought into the Father. Consequently, when the Lord spoke of going to the Father, He was declaring that He, with the humanity that He put on in incarnation, would return to the Father. Watchman Nee touches on this matter from the perspective of Philippians 2:5-11:

He was able to return [to the Father] because He accomplished a perfect and pure submission. Suffering upon suffering was piled on Him, but He remained absolutely submissive. There was not the slightest reaction or rebellion. Therefore, God exalted Him and ushered Him back as Lord in the Godhead. This was not just a refilling of what had been emptied, but the ushering of a MAN into the Godhead by the Father. The Son became Jesus (the Man), and was received back into the Godhead. (45)

This is an astounding declaration that is only strengthened by the fact that the Lord spoke of it before it happened (John 14:29).

Since the believers' incorporation into the Father's house through the operation of the Spirit of reality is the focus of chapter 14, the preponderance of the references in this chapter point to the enlargement of the divine incorporation following the death and resurrection of Christ, who comes into the believers as the Spirit, as another Comforter. There are references to this aspect of incorporation in verses 3, 12 through 20, and 28 through 29. In verse 3 the place that the Lord was going to prepare is the believers' place in the Body of Christ, which is the enlarged incorporation of the Triune God. This enlargement occurred in the resurrection of Christ.

Through Christ's death and resurrection, the body of Christ has increased to be His corporate Body, which is the church, including all His believers, who have been regenerated through His resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). In Christ's resurrection the church is the Body of Christ, which is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 3:6), God's habitation (Eph. 2:21-22), God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

The many abodes are the many members of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5), which is God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). (Recovery Version, John 14:2, notes 1 and 2)

Verses 12 through 23 contain the longest extended portion of the Lord's speaking in this chapter concerning the believers' incorporation into the Triune God. Just as the Lord was the tabernacle of God, who lived, moved, and worked among men, the enlarged incorporation of the Body of Christ is a living, moving, and working dwelling place. Because the Lord lives, the Body of Christ lives (v. 19). Because the believers are in the name, the reality of the person of Christ, the works that they do in His name will be accomplished (vv. 12-14), and the Father will be glorified in the Son, who comes to be in them as their inward Comforter (vv. 16-19). With the life of the Triune God, the name of the Lord, the presence of the Father, and the indwelling of the Spirit of reality as another Comforter, the incorporation of the believers into the Body of Christ was realized on the day of the Lord's resurrection; hence, the Lord unequivocally acknowledged this coming reality, declaring, "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (v. 20).

That day refers to the day of resurrection, not to the day of our bodily resurrection when the Lord will come to usher in the millennial kingdom, because none of the things spoken of by the Lord could be accomplished by the believers apart from the incorporate reality described

by the Lord in these verses. How could we live according to the divine life without being incorporated into the realm of the divine life, which was made available to redeemed humanity through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3)? How could we ask in His name if we have not been incorporated into the reality of His person, which is the reality of His name? How could we do greater works than the Lord without being incorporated into Him? And how could the Father receive any glory from us apart from our being incorporated into the glorified and glorifying Son? Govett, regrettably sees nothing of this and relegates the fulfillment of the realization of our incorporation, which occurred on "that day," to the day of the Lord's second coming.

What day is spoken of here? The day of the Saviour's resurrection, or that of the Spirit's descent? Are these words realised by all believers now? I think not. 'The Son is in the Father; and believers are in the Son, and He is in us.' But how do we know it? On Scripture testimony. It is something we do not comprehend. It is too high for us.

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But in these words a day is promised in which evidence new and satisfactory shall be granted. That which we believe now on the testimony of One who knows, shall then be perceived by ourselves, as the consequence of our enlarged powers in resurrection. The expression 'that day' too, generally, if not universally, points to the millennial, or resurrection-day. (171-172)

Govett's teaching denies the operative power and the function of the Spirit of reality. Apprehending our incorporation into the Body of Christ is not something that is too high for us. Admittedly, it is too high for a mere human, one unregenerated in spirit and unrenewed in mind, but the apprehension that the Lord spoke of does not originate with us. It comes from the enlightening of the Spirit of reality who teaches all things and who brings to our remembrance the meaning of the Lord's word (John 14:26).

The resurrection of Christ has made it possible for us to be joined to Him, thereby enlarging the incorporation of the Triune God to include the Body of Christ. The Lord

spoke of this economic enlargement as an eternal and ordained reality. In verse 2 He spoke of the chosen, the many abodes, as already being in the Son, the Father's house: "In My Father's house *are* many abodes; *if it were not so*, I would have told you" (emphasis added). Then in verse 23 the Lord spoke of the Father and Son coming to these abodes in resurrection and making an abode with them, that is, to abide in them. Consequently, the enlargement of the Father's house, the Son as a house with many abodes in verse 2, is realized experientially in verse 23, when the Father and the Son come to those who love Him and keep His word and make an abode with them. The abiding of the many abodes in the Son and the abiding of the Father and Son in the many abodes accomplish the goal of enlarging the Father's house by the mutual indwelling of God and humanity in the Body of Christ, a mutual abiding that reflects and displays the essence of incorporation. This mutual abiding, however, is only possible because the Son is the Father's house.

The Son as the Father's House in John 14

In John 14 the Father's house is the Son. John 14 speaks of the Son as the Father's house from eternity past to eternity future. John 14 reveals that the Son is the Father's house in every stage of His economical process to accomplish redemption and to impart Himself in resurrection as the Spirit. John 14 also unveils that the Son is the Father's house in His living and working in the believers to fit us together so that we may grow into a holy temple in Him, becoming an enlarged dwelling place of God in spirit (Eph. 2:21-22).

From eternity past, through their mutual coinherence, the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son (John 14:10). This mutual coinherence was manifested in time in the humanity of Jesus (v. 9), and His humanity was eternally incorporated into the Triune God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (v. 20). In His essential being and in every stage of His economical manifestation, the Son indwells the Father and the Father indwells the Son, making the Son the place of the Father's dwelling, that is, the dwelling place of the Father, the Father's house.⁵ According to the Lord's charge, we should believe in this eternal coinherence (v. 11).

In incarnation the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son. In His incarnation He was the tabernacle of God (1:14), the One in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily (Col. 2:9); He was the Father's house. This fact is supported by the Lord's reference to the phrase *My Father's house* in John 2:16, which He equated with the word *temple* in verse 19, and which John, in turn, interprets under the inspiration of the Spirit as "the temple of His body" in verse 21, which was

raised from the dead in three days. Just as the physical temple on earth was the Father's house prior to the incarnation, the incarnated Christ was the Father's house as the tabernacle of God (1:14). In the tabernacling Son, the Father, abiding in the Son, did His works in and through the Son, making the works of the Son one with the works of the Father (14:10). The working Son was one with the working Father to such an extent that to see the Son was equal to seeing the Father and to know the Son was equal to knowing the Father (vv. 7, 9). According to the Lord's charge, we should believe in His incarnate works in oneness with the Father (v. 11).

In resurrection, the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son, but in His coming to the believers as another Comforter, as the Spirit of reality sent by the Father in His name, the dwelling place of the Son was enlarged to include the believers (vv. 16-17, 26). Prior to His death and resurrection, the Lord was abiding with the disciples, but in His coming as the Spirit in resurrection, He indwelt them (v. 17). The believers' entrance into the reality of this indwelling was made possible through Christ's redemptive death on the cross and through the impartation of the divine life in resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). On the day of His resurrection, on that day, the Father's house was enlarged in the Son to include the believers, who were brought into the divine and mystical Body of Christ and thus into the Father through the way prepared by the Son in the fellowship of the Spirit (John 14:3, 6). We are living in the days in which it is possible to know that the Son is in the Father, that we are in the Son, and that the Son is in us (v. 20). According to the Lord's word to the disciples on the night of His death, these things were spoken so that we would believe (v. 29).

Even in the intensified ministry of Christ in the church Age, the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son. It is in this stage of Christ's ministry that greater works will be done; however, these works will not be done apart from Christ but in Christ as the Father's house (v. 12), and the work will be directed toward the Father and the Son coming to a believer in an atmosphere of love to make an abode with him in the Father's house (v. 23). This is related to the building up of the church as the Body of Christ so that the Father may be glorified in the Son as His enlarged dwelling place (v. 13). In this enlarged dwelling place, the believers are incorporated into His name and subsequently ask in His name, enabling the Lord to accomplish the work that is asked of Him (vv. 13-14). This asking is not related to materialistic requests but to that which enables the Triune God to make His home in our hearts and to that which enables us to be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17, 19). In the believers' experience of this enlarged incorporation, the commandments of the Lord are kept in an atmosphere of mutual love between the believers and the

Son, the Father and the believers, and the Son and the believers (John 14:21), expanding the sphere of love that has been present in the Godhead from the beginning (v. 31). In this work, the believers and the Lord rise as one and go forward as one to consummate the age and bring in the ultimate manifestation of the Father's house, which is the New Jerusalem, the enlarged tabernacle of God (v. 31; Rev. 21:3).

Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John speaks of the Son as the Father's house, not of heaven as the Father's house, and it speaks of the Son as the Father's house in relation to His essential being and in relation to every stage of His economical process to enlarge the Father's house. This enlargement requires the preparatory work of death and resurrection, and it is this specific work of preparation that is largely the focus of the Lord's word of comfort to His disciples in this chapter.

The Preparation and Enlargement of the Father's House in John 14

It is easy to understand the word *prepare* in verse 3 if one accepts the view that a physical mansion is being prepared in heaven. But if the Father's house is the Son, what is the significance of the word *prepare* in the phrase *if I go and prepare a place for you*? If the Lord is not physically constructing a mansion, what is being prepared, why is there a need for preparation, and why does this preparation involve the Lord's going and the Lord's coming? The answers to these questions are interwoven throughout the Lord's word to His disciples in John 14.

The preparation of a place for us in the Son as the Father's house involves the going of the Lord into death to accomplish an eternal redemption and the coming of the Lord in resurrection as the Spirit to impart the Triune God with His life and nature into those who believe into Him.

If I go...I am coming proves that the Lord's going (through His death and resurrection) was His coming (to His disciples—vv. 18, 28). He came in the flesh (1:14) and was among His disciples, but He could not enter into them while He was in the flesh. He had to take the further step of passing through death and resurrection in order to be transfigured from the flesh into the Spirit that He might come into the disciples and dwell in them, as revealed in vv. 17-20. (Recovery Version, v. 3, note 1)

In order for fallen humanity to enter into the Son as the Father's house, the Lord's preparation specifically addressed the two main barriers to our incorporation into the Body of Christ: sin and death.⁶ The presence of sin is

a barrier that God in His righteousness will not overlook, even though He has a heart of love. All of humanity bears the taint and operation of sin in their being and falls short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23); consequently, there is no possibility that sinful humanity can be joined to the God of glory. Rather than being joined to the Triune God as He originally intended in the creation of humanity, sinful humanity must be judged, and death is the judgment for the wages of sin (6:23). The entrance of sin through one man, Adam, also brought in another barrier of consequence—death (5:12), which is spoken of by God in His warning to Adam, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). This is the death that Paul also speaks of in Ephesians 2:1 and 5 when he says that we were "dead in...offenses and sins" and that "we were dead in offenses." All of humanity bears the stench of death and suffers the separation that comes from being alienated from the life of God (4:18); consequently, there is no possibility that dead humanity can be a temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16). In order for sinful and deadened humanity to be incorporated into the Son as the Father's house, there is a need for redemption through the sacrifice

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of death and enlivening through the impartation of the divine life.

In the Lord's going into death, an eternal redemption was accomplished, and in the Lord's coming as the Spirit of reality in resurrection, the redeemed believers were enlivened with the divine life. The Lord's going and coming was a dual preparation: It prepared the believers to be received by the Lord (John 14:3), by washing them of their sins and regenerating them with the divine life, and it prepared the Lord to receive the believers by becoming the Comforter (16:7), the Spirit of reality, in resurrection, enabling the Lord to spiritually impart His work on the cross and His work in resurrection to those who believe.

Preparing the Father's House through Death and Resurrection

The preparation of the Lord to bring the believers into the Father's house began with incarnation, in which a body was prepared for Him so that He could replace the

sacrifices of the old covenant with His body on the cross as a willing, submissive, and substitutionary sacrifice (Heb. 10:5-9). In the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, the believers have been sanctified from every negative element separating God from humanity and humanity from God (v. 10). In the eyes of God, those who are sanctified have been perfected forever by the one offering of Jesus Christ (v. 14). On the cross Christ dealt with sin (Rom. 8:3), sins (Col. 1:14), death (2 Tim. 1:10), the world (Gal. 6:14), the flesh (Col. 2:11), the self (Gal. 2:20), the old man (Rom. 6:6), and Satan (Heb. 2:14).

Even though the Lord's death on the cross for our redemption is quite clearly revealed in Hebrews 10, which speaks of both the Lord's body as a better sacrifice and of His offering of His body,⁷ the cross is not directly referenced in John 14,⁸ because this chapter emphasizes the incorporation of the believers into the Father's house following the coming of the Lord as another Comforter, the Spirit of reality. It can also be said that at the time of the Lord's word in John 14, the cross had not yet been confirmed to Him as the will of God, as the cup that He should drink. This confirmation came later in the Garden of Gethsemane, at which time He was able to demonstrate His oneness with the Father's will by asking of Peter, "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (18:11).

The coming of the Lord in resurrection as the Spirit follows His drinking of the cup through His death on the cross. In the work of the Lord, death and resurrection are an inseparable pair: "Destroy this temple [death], and in three days I will raise it up [resurrection]" (2:19; cf. Matt. 16:21; Mark 10:33-34; Luke 18:31-33). Without Christ's death terminating all the negative elements associated with the flesh of sin, the likeness of which He bore (Rom. 8:3), Jesus Christ would not have been able to go to the Father. But through His all-terminating death and His Spirit-enlivening resurrection, His humanity was divinized and brought into the incorporation of the Triune God.

The crucifixion put Christ to death only in His flesh—which He received through His incarnation (John 1:14)—not in His Spirit as His divinity. His Spirit as His divinity did not die at the cross when His flesh died; rather, His Spirit as His divinity was made alive, enlivened, with new power of life. (Recovery Version, 1 Pet. 3:18, note 3)

In the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, He was designated the Son of God in His humanity and in power according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4).

The going and coming of the Lord is also circumscribed

by the element of time, which the Lord alludes to with the phrase *a little while*. The Lord's going into death and coming in resurrection involved the passage of a little time—the three days following the Lord's death and burial. The Lord specifically indicated that He would come to the disciples to whom He was speaking, not just to the believers in some general sense at the time of His second coming. His coming, He assured them, would be in that day, the day of His bodily resurrection, a day in which the disciples would receive the Holy Spirit and know the reality of the Son in the Father, the believers in the Son, and the Son in the believers (John 20:22). The Lord, who promised the disciples that He would not leave them orphans, came to them on the night of His resurrection, breathed Himself as the Spirit into them and brought them into the Father's house, ending forever their status as orphans by bringing them into the house of the living Father.

The Lord's going points to His coming in resurrection as the Spirit to impart the divine life into the believers to make them the members of His Body, incorporating them into the Father's house. This is the focus of the Lord's word to His disciples. He began by declaring to the disciples, "I go...I am coming" (14:2-3); He assured them that His coming would end their status as orphans: "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you" (v. 18); He clarified that His coming is also the coming of the Father: "My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (v. 23); and He affirmed that His going and His coming are ultimately related to His place and the place of the disciples in the Father: "I am going away and I am coming to you...I am going to the Father...when it happens you may believe" (vv. 28-29).

Our place in the Father's house has been secured by the coming of Christ as another Comforter, as the Spirit of reality. Prior to the resurrection of Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), we were dead in trespasses and sins. The death of Christ dealt with our trespasses and sin, but we were still dead in the eyes of God. The resurrection of Christ then regenerated us unto a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3), dealing with our problem of death. When Jesus was glorified in His resurrection, the Spirit who "was not yet" was imparted as life into us (John 7:37-39). Having been washed of our sins and having been filled with the divine life, every barrier to the incorporation of the Triune God and redeemed, regenerated humanity has been cleared away, making it possible for us to be an abode in the Father's house and for the Father and the Son to come and make their abode in us as members of the Body of Christ.

Without the preparation of His death and resurrection, Christ, the first Comforter, could only be with the disciples,

but following His death on the cross and His resurrection as the Spirit, Christ, as another Comforter, abides in the believers. The mutual abiding of Christ in the believers and the believers in Christ is further revealed in John 15, but the impact of this mutual abiding, which is the enlargement of the Father's house, is revealed in John 14.

Enlarging the Father's House through Incorporation

Following the preparation of a place for the believers in the Father's house through the Lord's going into death and His coming in resurrection as the Spirit, the Father's house was enlarged from simply the Son with His complete divinity and perfect humanity to include the believers in the Son with their redeemed and regenerated humanity. Now there truly are many abodes in the Father's house because the Father's house includes the many believers, who have been indwelt by and incorporated into the Triune God through the redeeming death of Christ and the life-imparting resurrection of Christ as the life-giving Spirit.

The enlargement of the Son, the Father's house, as the incorporation of the Triune God is the central point of John 14. This enlargement is realized by the operation of the Spirit of reality, who comes from the Father in the Son's name (vv. 16-17, 26). In His coming to abide in the believers, the Spirit teaches the believers all things and reminds them of all the things that the Lord said (v. 26). In particular, the Spirit functions to remind the believers and to make real the meaning of the words, "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (v. 20). Being in the Son, the believers have the Lord's commandments intrinsically and can keep them through His love, which is reciprocated by the Father, enabling the Father and Son to make an abode in them. When the Father and the Son make an abode with the believers, the incorporation that is the Triune God is effectively enlarged, because the believers have been incorporated into the Son as the many members of the Body of Christ. In their status as members there is no assumption of the divine headship, which remains Christ's alone; there is only a divine *us* that can rise, go forth, and manifest the enlarged incorporation of the Triune God through the operation of the divine economy (v. 31).

The Manifestation of the Father's House in John 14

The Father's house that has been enlarged through incorporation by virtue of the economical process of the Lord's death and resurrection manifests the oneness of the Triune God as peace.⁹ Prior to the Lord's going into death, the Lord could only leave peace with the disciples; that is, He could reassure them with a word of comfort


to calm their troubled hearts (16:33). But after His coming, He could give them His very peace, His condition of oneness with the Father and the Spirit (14:27). The oneness of the Son with the Father and Spirit is so complete that the ruler of the world has nothing in Him (v. 30). In the divine incorporation, which is the Father, the Son with both divinity and humanity, and the Spirit, there is only the element of God. There is no element in Him other than the divine life and nature and the divinized elements of humanity that have been compounded into Him through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. When these things are made real in the believers through the teaching and reminding of the Spirit of reality, it is possible for the world to know that the Son loves the Father and is carrying out the work of the Father through the enlarged incorporation, which is His Body (v. 31).

In order for the world to know of the Son's love for the Father in the divine incorporation, there is the need for a present and visible oneness among the believers who have been incorporated into the Father's house.¹⁰ This is

*Through the Lord's going into death
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the Father's house was enlarged from simply the Son
with His complete divinity and perfect humanity
to include the believers in the Son
with their redeemed and regenerated humanity.*

entirely possible because the believers believe into Christ, and by virtue of this organic oneness, His works will be done by the believers in oneness with Him. We should not assume that our works will be separate from Christ; rather, we will ask in His name, and He will do them so that the Father can be manifested in the Son, who has been enlarged as the Father's house (John 14:12-13).

Conclusion

In the Father's house are many abodes, many members of the Body of Christ who have been incorporated into the Son as the enlargement of the Father's house. There are no physical mansions; there is only a deep and intrinsic oneness of the Triune God with redeemed and regenerated humanity. This oneness has been made possible by the Lord's going into death and by His coming in resurrection as the Spirit of reality, who guides us into all the reality of our incorporate oneness. Through His guiding and our cooperation, the reality of our incorporate oneness can be made known to the world. May we rise up in the Lord and go forth in Him to glorify the Father as His house. 

Notes

¹The articles in this issue of *Affirmation & Critique* focus more on affirming the deeper revelation of God's economy that is unfolded in chapter 14 of the Gospel of John than on critiquing the woefully shortsighted view that the Lord was speaking of physical mansions in heaven. This view is the common understanding of most Christians, and it is repeatedly reinforced by guides and teachers who expound the contents of this chapter. Such teachings, despite their good intentions, constitute winds of teaching that stunt the spiritual growth of the believers by tossing them about and carrying them away from the central purpose of God, depriving them of truth and hindering the growth of the Body which builds itself up in love (Eph. 4:14-16).

²In many respects, it does not require much effort to critique the popular teachings contained in books supporting the view that a personal, physical mansion awaits us in heaven. Books that retell "visions of heaven," which cater to a multitude of physical lusts and soulish longings, are easy targets. Consequently, I do not feel that they are deserving of much attention in this article. When the Lord repeatedly charged His disciples to deny their self during His physical sojourn with them on the earth (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23), and when He daily demonstrated His denial of even His perfect humanity in order to live by the divine life of the Father (John 14:10; 17:8), it is ludicrous to suggest that the Lord would reward those who faithfully take up their cross to follow Him in the denial of their self with a physical edifice that supports a lifestyle of self-indulgence.

It is equally incredulous to assume that human beings who have been transformed by the operation of the divine life and by partaking of the divine nature of the Triune God would even have a predilection or desire for a physical mansion when our spiritual blessings are realized only in and through our incorporation into the divine and mystical being of the Son Himself (Eph. 1:3). An exhaustive critique of the view that a physical mansion awaits the believers in heaven is contained in the April 2000 issue of *Affirmation & Critique*. The full content of this issue is available online in the archive section at www.affcrit.com.

The hearts of the simple are deceived by smooth words and flattering speech related to a future reward of a heavenly mansion (Rom. 16:18). It is, therefore, all the more regrettable that this view has been legitimized by the teachings of respected Christian teachers who have failed to comprehend the depth of the Lord's word in John 14. This tendency can be seen in the recent writings of John Montgomery Boice and the more dated but still respected work of Robert Govett. In Boice's *The Gospel of John*, the exposition of John 14 begins with a notable heading, "A Home in Heaven," in which he states, "The second reason Jesus gives why we should not be troubled is that there is a place prepared for us in heaven. 'In my Father's house are many rooms,' he said; 'if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you'" (1060). Even

though there is no direct reference to heaven in this chapter, Boice simply declares that the Father's house is a reference to heaven. Based on this assumption, every deep matter in this chapter is quickly subverted. The going of the Lord is interpreted as the Lord going to heaven to begin His physical preparation of our mansion, even though the Word clearly states that the Lord is going to the Father, and that He is our way to the Father. Similarly, the coming of the Lord is interpreted as the Lord coming from heaven at the time of His second coming to bring all the believers to their prepared mansions, even though the Word clearly states that His coming is on "that day," the day of His resurrection, as the Spirit.

The going and coming of the Lord are not related to His preparation of a physical mansion; they are related to His preparation of us to enable us to be economically received by Him, and they are related to His preparation of Himself to enable Him to be economically received by us to make Him and us, us and Him, a mutual abode, thereby enlarging the Father's house (14:3, 17). His preparation involves His going into death for our redemption, which is the judicial prerequisite for the Triune God to receive humanity to Himself in the divine fellowship. His preparation also involves His coming as the Spirit in resurrection, which is the organic prerequisite for our receiving of Him through His indwelling of us and for our incorporation into His mystical Body as the Father's house.

The Lord's deep work of preparation does not involve the physical construction of a physical mansion, as is implied by Boice in the following extended quotation that is presented under the heading "Our Personal Dwelling":

The third reason Jesus gave the disciples why they should not be troubled is that he was going to prepare a place for them. On the surface this seems to be much the same point as before; that is, that there is a heavenly home and that there are many abiding places in it. But it is not really a repetition. It is something more. There is a place called heaven. Jesus was going there. But in addition to this he tells them that there is work that he is going to do for them once he gets there.

What did Jesus refer to when he said that he was going to prepare a place for his disciples? I am not sure that there is a full answer to that question, because I do not know of any passage of the Bible that bears directly upon it. As I think about it, I wonder if the fact that we ask that question does not hide the verse's true meaning. We read the verse "I am going there to prepare a place for you" and focus on the word "prepare." What if we were to focus on the words "for you" instead? In that case, the emphasis would not be upon whatever architectural alterations the Lord may be making in heaven, but rather upon the fact that it is for us as individuals that he is altering it. In other words, it would be the promise that in that great home of the Father's there is a place being prepared particularly for us. (1061)

There are two striking points in the above passage. First, given Boice's unequivocal acceptance of the assumption that the abodes in the Father's house refer to physical mansions in heaven, there is an implicit acceptance of a further assumption that the Lord's preparation must be physical as well since it is related to a place that is being prepared particularly for us, that is, a place that caters to our personal wants and desires.

Second, even though Boice posits this further assumption in relation to the Lord's preparation, he amazingly acknowledges that he does not know of "any passage of the Bible that bears directly upon" this matter. If a physical mansion and its physical preparation by Christ in heaven are the central point of the Bible, does it not seem strange that Boice cannot find any passage in the entire Bible that bears directly upon this preparatory work? Such an admission should have given Boice some pause to consider the validity of his teaching. Because he is locked into the vision of a heavenly mansion, however, he can only shift his reader's focus away from the Lord's preparation to the Lord's personal consideration of our needs. The sentimentality of the thought contained in this shift is touching, but it diminishes the emphasis on Christ's preparatory work in John 14.

While the Lord is surely motivated by divine love, His love cannot be applied or received by fallen humanity without the preparatory work of His death, which positions us to receive grace through the satisfaction of God's righteous requirement through the preparatory work of His redemptive death and His resurrection, which enables the love of God and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be applied to us through the fellowship of the Spirit, who has come to us in resurrection. Far from there being no passages that bear directly on the Lord's preparatory work, the entire Bible, beginning from Moses and all the prophets, is a record of prophecy and fulfillment related to the Lord's work in death and resurrection to enter into His glory and thereby bring the believers into this same glory (Luke 24:26-27).

The Lord's work of preparing a place for us in the Father's house is even referred to in John 2:16 and 19, where He associated the Father's house with the temple of His body, which would be destroyed through death but raised in resurrection in three days, the significance of which would be understood by the disciples only when the Spirit of reality within them would bring the Lord's word to their remembrance (v. 22).

In *Exposition of the Gospel of St. John*, Robert Govett, a respected teacher in the latter half of the nineteenth century, whose views were reflective of but not entirely dependent upon the teachings of the British Brethren, equally asserts a physical view of heaven complete with physical mansions, stating, "The House of the Father is in heaven...But the Lamb leads them onwards to God's vast city, capable of containing all His sons. The mansions exist already; they shall be fitted for our abode" (142). When respected teachers fall victim to the leaven of heaven, and subsequently promulgate it without question, it is not sur-

prising that many popularizers can tickle the itching ears of believers who have little taste for the word of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:3; Heb. 5:13), which involves the living of an operative application of the Lord's work of death and resurrection on the old man, the self of the believers, that must be crucified in order for us to live, move, and ask in His name and to love and keep His word so that the Father and Son in the fellowship of the Spirit can come and make an abode with us (John 14:13, 23).

³Please refer to the series of articles by Kerry S. Robichaux, which began in the 2004 issues of *Affirmation & Critique*, was resumed in the October 2007 issue, and is continued in this issue. These articles focus first on the Son's incorporation with the Divine Trinity in His incarnation and, second, on the believers' experience of incorporation with the Divine Trinity.

⁴The common teaching that the Father's house is heaven and that the many abodes in heaven are physical mansions is a prime example of explication that misunderstands the depths of the divine revelation.

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⁵The house of the Father is always associated with His Son and with sons. When God speaks of His desire for a house in Isaiah 66:1-2, for example, He declares that He will seek for this house in a man, a man who is contrite in spirit and who trembles at His word.

⁶Sin and death are the principal barriers. As the following footnote indicates, other obstacles also were dealt with by the Lord's redemptive death, including sins, death, the world, the flesh, the self, the old man, and Satan. All of these obstacles are inherent in sin—sin is the source of sins; sin issues in death; sin is manifested as the world; sin resides in the flesh; sin is expressed through the self individually and the old man corporately; and sin is the nature of Satan. All these obstacles, however, are overcome by the blood of Christ and the life of Christ.

The Lord's intention in this chapter was to bring man into God for the building of His dwelling place. But between man and God there were many obstacles, such as sin, sins, death, the world, the flesh, the self, the old man, and Satan. For the Lord to bring man into God, He

had to solve all these problems. Therefore, He had to go to the cross to accomplish redemption that He might open the way and make a standing for man, that man might enter into God. This standing in God, being enlarged, becomes the standing in the Body of Christ. Anyone who does not have a standing, a place, in God does not have a place in the Body of Christ, which is God's dwelling place. Hence, the Lord's going in order to accomplish redemption was to prepare a place in His Body for the disciples. (Recovery Version, v. 3, note 2)

⁷Christ's offering of His body is equivalent to His going to the cross because He willingly offered His body in submission to the will of God; that is, He willingly went to the cross to die for our redemption.

⁸In John 14 there is no direct reference to the cross, and so it could be argued that *going* does not refer to His death on the cross but rather to going to heaven to prepare a physical mansion. Such an argument, however, overlooks two points related to the Lord's speaking. In this chapter the Lord referred to His coming more than to His going, indicating that the enlargement of the incorporation of the Father's house through His coming as the Spirit in resurrection is His primary emphasis. And since His coming follows His going, His going must refer to an event prior to the resurrection, that is, His death. He spoke of going in verses 2, 3, 4, 12, and 28, but He spoke of coming in verses 3, 16 (*give*), 18, 21 (*manifest*), 23, 26 (*send*), 27 (*give*), and 28.

Giving, manifesting, and sending are all related to the Lord's coming. The Father's giving in verse 16 is realized in the coming of the Son as another Comforter. The Father and the Son's manifestation in verse 21 is the coming of the Lord to manifest Himself to the believers as the Spirit. The sending of the Spirit in verse 26 is realized in the coming of the Comforter in the Son's name. And the giving of peace in verse 27 is realized in the coming of the Son. Since the Lord's coming is inextricably linked to the coming of the Spirit, who will indwell and abide in the believers, the Lord's going must have been accomplished prior to the time of the Lord's coming as the Spirit.

⁹The peace of the Lord is the peace that He knows, experiences, and manifests. It is the oneness that is inherent within the essential Trinity. As such, it is much more than the peace that the world can give (v. 27). When the Lord appeared to the disciples on the night of the day of His resurrection, He fulfilled His promise in verse 27 by breathing the Holy Spirit into them, prefacing His act with the words, "Peace be to you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (20:21). The peace given to the believers is demonstrated by the oneness of the sending Son with the sending Father.

Peace is a significant matter in the New Testament. The Father sent the Son to announce the gospel of peace (Acts 10:36); that is, the good news that oneness with the Triune God fulfills the purpose of humankind. This oneness, which is enlarged and displayed through the Body of Christ, has been made possible

because we have been incorporated into Christ Himself, who is our peace (Eph. 2:14-15). On the cross He broke down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and He created the two in Himself into one new man, making peace and reconciling both in one Body to God (v. 16). Peace was accomplished on the cross, but this peace was enlarged through the coming of the Spirit who announces peace as the gospel (v. 17). When peace is announced, local expressions of the oneness of the Triune God are established as local churches, and the Triune God is known as the God of peace in all the churches of the saints (1 Cor. 14:33). In the churches, the believers are charged to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Keeping the oneness, experientially, involves the application of the work of the cross, which enables all things to be reconciled to Him based on the peace of the cross (Col. 1:20). It involves setting our mind on the spirit to activate the life and peace that is in our spirit and to touch the God of peace who is with us (Rom. 8:6; 15:33), and it involves allowing the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, to which we were called in one Body (Col. 3:15). With the effectual working of the cross, with a mind that is life and peace, and with the peace of Christ arbitrating in our hearts, the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding is able to guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Eventually, the believers and the Triune God will manifest for eternity the incorporated oneness of the Triune God and redeemed humanity as a city of peace, the New Jerusalem.

¹⁰The Father's house is not physical in heaven, nor is it only in the future. This understanding deceives the believers by directing their attention to physical blessings in the future and frustrates the building up of the Body of Christ by undermining the need to keep the oneness of the Spirit today. When every blessing of significance is relegated to the future, so is the matter of oneness. How many Christians, who acknowledge the need for oneness, have relegated the accomplishment of this oneness to a time in the "sweet bye and bye"? Teaching that oneness is a matter for the future impedes the believers from arriving at the oneness of the faith (Eph. 4:13) and fosters an environment in which the crucial items of the faith can be ignored, especially items related to Christ in His full ministry and to the church as the universal and local expression of the oneness of the Triune God.

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