

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
21:18-25

18. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish. 19. This He spoke, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, Follow me. 20. Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he who betrays you? 21. Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*? 22. Jesus said to him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow me. 23. Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to you? 24. This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. 25. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

18.--[*Truly, truly, I say to you, etc.*] In this verse our Lord forewarns the Apostle Peter what death he must expect to be the conclusion of his ministry. After restoring him to his office and commissioning him to be a pastor, He tells him plainly what his end will be. He holds out no prospect of temporal ease and an earthly kingdom. On the contrary, He bids him look forward to a violent death. If he shows his love by feeding his Master's sheep, he must not be surprised if he is made partaker of his Master's sufferings. And so it was. Peter lived to be persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, and at length slain for Christ's sake. It happened exactly as his Master had predicted. Most ecclesiastical historians say that he suffered martyrdom at Rome in one of the first persecutions, and was crucified with his head downwards.

Melancthon remarks that Peter, like most Jews, was probably expecting that after our Lord's resurrection, He would take to Himself His kingdom and reign in glory with His disciples. Jesus warns him that he must expect nothing of the kind. Tribulation and not glory was the prospect before him in this world.

It is fair to say that some learned writers deny entirely that Peter ever was at Rome, and consequently deny the truth of the ecclesiastical tradition that he was crucified there with his head downward. Calovius gives a long passage from Casaubon maintaining this view. Whether it was so or not does not affect the passage before us. In any case, wherever he died, there is no reason to doubt that Peter died a violent death.

The expression, "Truly, truly, I say to you," is thoroughly characteristic of St. John's Gospel. We cannot doubt that Peter would remember how solemn

were the former occasions when our Lord used this phrase, and would see a peculiar solemnity in the words of this verse. Specially would Peter remember the night when our Lord was betrayed, when His Master said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock shall not crow till you have denied Me thrice" (John 13:38).

The expression, "when you were young," is commonly thought to indicate that Peter was now an old man when these words were spoken. Perhaps too much stress is laid on the words, especially considering the context. I think the safe plan is to interpret it as meaning, "when you were a younger man than you are now."

The expression, "you girded yourself and walked where you wished," appears to me a general phrase denoting the freedom from restraint and independence of movement which Peter enjoyed when he followed his calling as a young fisherman, before he was called to be a disciple and Apostle. I cannot, like some commentators, see any allusion to Peter's recent action, when he put his "fisher's coat about him," cast himself into the sea, and waded to the shore. I rather regard it as a proverbial phrase. A young Jewish fisherman, when inclined to go here or there, would, according to oriental custom, gird up his loins and walk off upon his journey at the pleasure of his own will. "This," say our Lord to Peter, "you use to do when a young man."

The expression, "when you are old," seems to denote, at any rate, that Peter would be an older man than he then was, before he died, and would suffer martyrdom in his old age. It certainly condemns the idea entertained by many that the Apostle Peter was an aged man when our Lord left the world. Old age, in his case, is clearly represented as a thing future.

The expression, "You shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you," is regarded by almost all commentators as an intimation of the manner of Peter's death. He was to stretch forth his hands at the command of another, that is, of an executioner, and in all probability to be bound by that executioner to the cross on which he was to suffer. If this be a correct interpretation of the words, it certainly favors the idea that crucified persons were "bound" as well as "nailed" to the cross. The phrase "gird" may possibly refer to a custom of girding a person's loins and putting cords around his middle before crucifying him. The contrast would then be more natural between a man girding up his own loins to walk and another girding him around the loins for execution.

The expression, "carry you where you do not wish," must mean that the executioner, having bound Peter to the cross, would carry him so bound to the place where the cross would be reared up, after a manner that would be repugnant and painful to flesh and blood. It cannot, of course, mean that Peter would object to his punishment and resist it. It can only mean that his punishment would be one that must needs be a heavy trial to his natural will.

Brentius thinks that "another" in this sentence refers to Nero or the executioner.

We should note in this wonderful prophecy the unhesitating positiveness and decision with which our Lord speaks of things to come. He knew perfectly all the circumstances of His Apostle's death long before it took place.

We should note how faithfully and unreservedly our Lord tells Peter what the consequences of his apostleship would be. He does not tempt him onward by promises of earthly success and temporal rewards. Suffering, death, and the cross are plainly exhibited before the eyes of his mind as the end to which he must look forward.

We should note how even our Lord intimates that suffering is painful to flesh and blood. He speaks of it as a thing that Peter will most naturally shrink from: "You do not wish." Our Lord does not expect us to "enjoy" bodily pain and suffering, though He asks us to be willing to endure it for His sake.

Chrysostom observes: "Christ here speaks of natural feeling and the necessity of the flesh, and shows that the soul is unwillingly torn away from the body. Though the will was firm, even then nature would be found in fault. For no one lays aside the body without feeling; God having suitably ordained this in order that violent deaths might not be many. For if, even as things are now, the devil has been able to effect this and has led thousands (by suicide) to precipices and pits, had not the soul felt such an affection for the body many would have rushed to this under any common discouragement."

Augustine observes: "No man likes to die; a state of feeling so natural that not even old age had power to remove it from blessed Peter, to whom Jesus said, 'You shall be led where you do not wish.' For our consolation, we may remember that even our Savior took this state of feeling on Himself, saying, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!'" He also says: "Were there nothing, or little of irksomeness in death, the glory of the martyr would not be so great as it is."

Calvin observes: "This must be understood as referring to the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, which believers feel within themselves. We cannot obey God in a manner so free and unrestrained as not to be drawn, as it were, by ropes in an opposite direction by the world and the flesh. Besides, it ought to be remembered that the dread of death is naturally implanted in us; for, to wish to be separated from the body is revolting to nature." Again he says: "Even the martyrs experienced a fear of death similar to our own, so that they could not gain a triumph over the enemies of truth but by contending with themselves."

Beza remarks that on one occasion, when Peter and John had been beaten and threatened by the Jewish Council, "they departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41). The expression, "where you would not," can therefore only refer to the natural will of flesh and blood. Flesh will feel. Holy Baxter in his last illness used to say, "I groan, but I do not grumble."

When Bishop Ridley was being chained to the stake, before he was burned as

a martyr at Oxford, he said to the smith who was knocking in the staple, "Good fellow, knock it in hard, for the flesh will have its way."

Ambrose, quoted by Jansenius, mentions a legend that when Peter was in prison at Rome before his martyrdom, he escaped and was going out of the city. Then Jesus Christ Himself appeared to him in a vision, and on Peter asking "Where are you going?" replied, "To Rome, to be crucified again." On hearing this, Peter returned to prison. The whole story is apocryphal and destitute of historical foundation. But it shows the current of feeling among early Christians.

19.--[*This he spoke...glorify God.*] We have here one of John's peculiar parenthetical comments, and one for which we may be specially thankful. Who can tell what commentators might have made of our Lord's prediction to Peter if John had not been mercifully inspired to tell us that Jesus spoke of his death?

The expression "what death" means "what kind of death" and is generally considered to indicate that the preceding verse describes death by crucifixion.

The expression "glorify God" is peculiarly interesting, because it teaches that a Christian may bring glory to God by his death as well as by his life. He does so when he bears it patiently, does not murmur, exhibits sensible peace, enjoys evident hope of a better world, testifies to others of the truth and consolation of the Gospel, and leaves broad evidences of the reality of his religion behind him. He who so dies glorifies God. The deaths of Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, Bradford, Rogers, Rowland Taylor, and many other English martyrs, in the days of Queen Mary, were said to have done more good even than their lives, and to have had immense influence in helping forward the Protestant Reformation.

[*And when...said...Follow Me.*] The precise meaning of this short and emphatic phrase is not very plain.

(a) Some think that it must be interpreted literally, and that our Lord simply meant, "Follow Me in the direction where I am now going. We have tarried here long enough. Let us be going." At first sight, this seems a thin and weak interpretation. But before we reject it entirely, we should carefully observe the language of the next verse.

(b) Some think that "Follow Me" must be interpreted spiritually, and that our Lord used the expression as a kind of watchword for Peter's course in life from that day forward. "Walk in my steps. Do as I have done. Follow Me wherever I lead you, even though it be to prison and death."

I see no reason why we should not adopt both views. There is such a depth and fullness in our Lord's sayings that I think we may safely do so. I therefore think it most probable that our Lord not only meant "Arise, and follow Me now," but also meant, "Always follow Me through life, whatever be the consequences." After all, Christ's three great words to Christians are "Come to Me, Learn of Me, and Follow Me" (Matt. 11:28,29).

Is there not in the words "Follow Me" a latent reference to the remarkable saying of our Lord to Peter on the night that Peter denied Him thrice? "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow Me afterward" (John 13:36).

20.--[*Then Peter, turning, etc.*] This verse brings in the Apostle John himself, described with more than usual feeling and particularity as "the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who leaned on his breast at supper," as if to prevent the possibility of mistake.

The expressions "turning" and "following" seem to me to place it beyond doubt that our Lord began to move away from the scene of the social meal when He said "Follow Me." No other view can explain them. There was a movement in a certain direction. As our Lord moved away, Peter followed Him. As he followed, Peter turned round and saw John following also. After John, I believe, the other five disciples followed also, or else they could hardly have heard the remarkable saying about "tarrying till I come," which they evidently did hear.

Tittman suggests that "When Peter saw John following, he was displeased, as Jesus had ordered Peter alone to follow with the intention of saying something to him apart. He therefore asked why Jesus permitted John to follow unbidden" He then thinks, if we adopt this interpretation, that the remarkable words of the following verse may only mean, "If I wish him to remain with the other disciples until I return to them, that is no business of yours. Just follow Me." This, however, seems to me rather a tame interpretation.

Stier observes: "There was something wrong at first in Peter's act of turning himself. He was commanded to follow and not to look around. Thus there was certainly an uncalled for and not artless looking aside, a side glance once more of comparison with others! After his deep humiliation, here is still some light trace of the ancient Simon."

21.--[*Peter, seeing...this man do?*] The Greek words of Peter's question would be literally rendered, "Lord: and this man what?" The precise meaning and object of the question are a point that has been much disputed.

(a) Some think that the question was entirely one of brotherly love, interest, and affection. They regard the inquiry as one which arose from Peter's tender feeling toward John, as the disciple whom he loved most among the Apostles. He would fain [eagerly, gladly] know what was to be the future lot of his beloved friend and brother.

(b) Some think that the question was one of unseemly curiosity. They regard it as one which Peter ought not to have asked. If our Lord did not volunteer any prediction about John, Peter ought not to have made any inquiry.

(c) Some think, as Flacius, that there was a latent jealousy in Peter's question, and that he seemed to suspect that John, not having denied Christ, would die an easier death than himself! I cannot think this for a moment.

My own belief is that there is truth in both the first two views. Our Lord's reply to Peter, recorded in the next verse, certainly indicates to my mind that Peter ought not to have been so forward to ask. On the other hand I should be sorry to say that Peter's inquiry arose entirely out of curiosity, when I mark Peter's unvarying connection with John on all occasions and evident brotherly love toward him. In feeling concern about John's future, after hearing about his own, Peter was not to blame. Grace does not require us to be cold and unfeeling about our friends. But in the manner of Peter's inquiry, there certainly seems to have been something to blame. Is there not about it a little touch of the old over-readiness to talk of others? It was once, "Though all men--all others--forsake You yet I will not." It is now, "If I am to die a violent death, what are others to do?"

It is certainly my own impression that Peter's question had special reference to John's end: "If I am to die a violent death, what is to be the end of my brother John?"

Leighton, quoted by Burgon, remarks: "This was a transient stumbling in one who, but lately recovered of a great disease, did not walk firmly. But it is the common track of most to wear out their days with impertinent inquiries. There is a natural desire in men to know the things of others and neglect their own, and to be more concerning about things to come than things present."

Henry remarks: "Peter seems more concerned for another than for himself. So apt are we to be busy in other men's matters but negligent in the concerns of our own souls, quick-sighted abroad but dim-sighted at home, judging others and prognosticating what they will do when we have enough to do to prove our own works and understand our own ways. Peter seems more concerned about events than about duty. John was younger than himself, and in the course of nature likely to survive him. 'Lord,' he says, 'what times shall he be reserved for?' Whereas if God by His grace enable us to persevere to the end and finish well and get safely to heaven, we need not ask, 'What shall be the lot of those that shall come after us?' Is it not well if peace and truth shall be in my days? Scripture predictions must be eyed for the direction of our conscience, not for the satisfying of our curiosity."

It is a curious fact worth remembering that John was one of the only two Apostles whose future lot had already been spoken of by Christ. "He shall drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with" (Mark 10:39).

22.--[*Jesus said to him, If I will, etc.*] Our Lord's answer to Peter can only be taken, in my judgment, as a rebuke. It was meant to teach the Apostle that he must first attend to his own duty, mind his own soul, fulfill his own course, and leave the future of other brethren in the hands of a wise and merciful Savior. He must not pry too curiously into God's counsels concerning John. What good would it do him to know whether John was to live a long life or a short one, to die a violent death or a natural one? Our Lord seems to say, "Stop inquiring about your brother's future

lot. You know that he is one of my sheep, and as such shall never perish and is in safe keeping. What is the rest to you? Have faith to believe that all will be well done about him. Look to your own soul and be content to follow Me." I cannot help seeing a latent resemblance between this place and the well-known passage at the end of Daniel's prophecy. "Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And He said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." "But you, go your way till the end be; for you shall rest, and stand in your lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:8,9,13).

Theophylact suggests that our Lord saw that Peter was vehemently attached to John and unwilling to be separated from him, and therefore meant to teach him that he must do his own work and follow Christ, wherever He might lead him, even though separation from John might be the consequence.

After all we must take care that we do not omit the special point of our Lord's words. What our Lord rebukes is not general concern about the souls of others, but over-anxiety and restless curiosity about the future of our friends. Such over-anxiety indicates lack of faith; we ought to be willing to leave their future in God's hands. To know their future would, in all probability, not make us one jot more happy. I can imagine nothing more miserable than to see in the distance tribulation and sorrow coming on our friends, and not to be able to avert it. Of what use would it have been to Peter to know that his beloved brother John would one day be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil at Ephesus during a persecution? What good would it have done Peter to know that John would spend years of weary captivity on the Isle of Patmos, and finally outlive all the company of the Apostles, and be left last and latest on the stormy sea of this troublous world? To know all this would not have done Peter the slightest good, and would more likely have added to his own sorrow. Wisely and well did our Lord say, "What is that to you?" Wisely and well does He teach us not to be overanxious about the future of our children, our relatives, and our friends. Far better for us, and far happier, to have faith in God and to let the great unknown future alone.

Burkitt observes: "There are two great varieties in men with reference to knowledge. The one is a neglect to know what it is our duty to know. The other is a curiosity to know what it does not belong to us to know."

In any case, the words "Follow Me" should always teach us that our first duty in religion is to look to our own souls, and to take heed that we ourselves follow Christ and walk with God. Whatever others may do or not do, suffer or not suffer, our own duty is clear and plain. People who are always looking at others, and considering others, and shaping their own course accordingly, commit a great mistake. Of all weak and foolish reasons assigned by some for not coming to the Lord's Supper, the weakest perhaps is that very common one, the *conduct of others* who are communicants! To such persons the words of our Lord apply with emphatic force--"What is that to you? You follow Me."

The words of our Lord, "If I will that he tarry till I come," are a deep and mysterious saying, and in every age of the Church have received different interpretations.

(a) Some, as Gerhard, Maldonatus, and Wordsworth, hold that Jesus meant, "If I will that he tarry a long time on earth, lingering here long after you are gone, until I come for him at death, what is that to you?" I cannot, however, admit this interpretation for a moment. Death and the coming of Christ are two totally different things, and it is an entire mistake to confound them, as people often do (with very good intentions) in selecting texts for tombstones as part of epitaphs. There is not a single passage in the New Testament where the coming of the Lord means death. Moreover, the very next verse in this chapter seems to place the two things in strong contrast, as not the same.

(b) Some actually hold that Jesus meant that the Apostle John was never to die at all but to remain alive until the second advent! This, however, is a wild and preposterous interpretation, which will satisfy no sober mind. Moreover, it is contradicted by the whole tenor of ecclesiastical history. All early writers, of any weight and authority, declare that John died a natural death in extreme old age.

Theophylact mentions a strange tradition that John is kept alive somewhere, and is to be slain together with Elias by Antichrist when he appears!

(c) Some, as Grotius, Hammond, Lightfoot, Whitby, Scott, Alford, and Ellicott, hold that Jesus meant by His coming, not His second advent at the end of the world, but His coming spiritually in judgment for the punishment of the Jews, the destruction of the temple, and the overthrow of the whole Jewish dispensation by the Romans. I cannot see this at all. I find no clear proof in the New Testament that the overthrow of the Jewish dispensation is ever called the "coming of the Lord." Moreover, it is an awkward fact that it is commonly agreed that the Apostle John lived for many years after Jerusalem was taken and the temple burned by Titus. Gerhard declares positively that there is not one instance in Scripture of the destruction of Jerusalem being called the "coming of the Lord."

(d) Bengel and Stier think it means that John was to tarry till the Lord came to reveal to him the visions recorded in the Book of Revelation.

(e) Some, as Hutcheson and Trench, think that Jesus did not mean to predict anything particular about John's future, but only used a general hypothetical expression. "Supposing I do will that he stay till I come, what is that to you? I do not say that I do will him to stay. But supposing it is my will, this is no affair of yours, and it becomes you not to inquire."

The question is one that will never be settled, and the sentence seems purposely left under a veil of mystery. If I must give an opinion, I decidedly lean to the last of the five views which I have stated.

23.--[*Then this saying went out, etc.*] In this verse John carefully describes the rise of the earliest ecclesiastical tradition. He says that it became a common saying among the brethren that he was not to die. Some very likely took it into their heads that, like Enoch and Elijah, he was to be translated and never see death but pass into glory without dying. The

Apostle takes pains to point out that Jesus never said that he was not to die and had only supposed the possibility of his "tarrying till He came." To my own mind, his manner of stating the point is strongly confirmatory of the view I have already supported: viz., that our Lord only used a hypothetical expression and did not at all intend to make a positive prediction.

We should carefully notice in this passage how easy it is for traditions to begin; and how soon, even with the best intentions, unfounded reports originate among religious men. Nothing is more unsatisfactory, nothing more uncertain, nothing more destitute of solid foundation than that huge mass of matter which the Roman Catholic Church has heaped together, and professes to respect, called "Catholic tradition." The moment a Christian departs from God's written Word and allows "Catholic tradition" any authority, he plunges into a jungle of uncertainty and will be happy if he does not make shipwreck of his faith altogether.

Flacius observes that not observing our Lord's "if" gave rise to a tradition! A single word omitted in a text may do harm.

Henry remarks: "Let us learn here the uncertainty of human tradition and the folly of building faith upon it. Here was a tradition, an apostolic tradition, a saying that went abroad among the brethren. It was early, it was common, it was public, and yet it was false. How little then are those unwritten traditions to be relied upon, which the Council of Trent has decreed to be worthy to be received with a veneration and pious affection equal to that which is owing to Holy Scripture."

Henry also remarks: "Let us learn the aptness of men to misinterpret the sayings of Christ. The grossest errors have sometimes shrouded themselves under the umbrage of incontestable truth, and the Scriptures themselves have been wrested by the unlearned and unstable. We must not think it strange if we hear the sayings of Christ misinterpreted, and quoted to patronize the errors of antichrist."

The Greek phrase which we render "should not die" is literally "does not die."

It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the words which Jesus addressed to Peter were heard by the other five Apostles. Otherwise the saying or report referred to in this verse could not have gone forth.

24.--[*This is the disciple, etc.*] In this verse the Apostle John makes a solemn declaration of his own authorship of the Gospel which bears his name, and of the truth of the matters which the Gospel itself contains. As usual, with characteristic humility, he does not give his name but modestly speaks of himself in the third person. It is as though he said: "Finally, I, John the Apostle, who leaned on Jesus' breast, declare that I am the person who here testifies of these sayings and doings of Christ, and who has here written them down in this book; and I know that I have told nothing but what is true, and that my testimony may be implicitly trusted."

The first person plural is here used by John, we should observe, just as it

is in the beginning of his first Epistle.

The verse seems written in order to assure all readers of John's Gospel that they need feel no doubt whatever that they have in this Gospel a faithful and true record of things that Jesus said and did, and that this, the last of the four narratives of Christ's history, is just as trustworthy, credible, and dependable as the books written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

25.--[*And there are also many other things, etc.*] In this verse John seems to wind up his book by breaking forth into a fervent declaration about the wonderful things that his Lord and Master had done. It is as though he said: "Though I finish my Gospel here, I have not told all the marvelous things that Jesus did while He was upon earth. There are many other things that he did, and many other word that He spoke, which are not recorded in my Gospel, nor yet in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Indeed, if every one were written down, I suppose the world would not receive them and could not comprehend their value."

The words which we render, "The books that should be written," would be more literally translated, "The books written."

Brentius calls attention to the very large number of miracles which, according to St. Matthew, were worked by our Lord of which we have no special record in any of the Gospels. (See Matt. 4:23,24; 11:5.) He justly argues that if these were all put down and described, it would greatly swell the Gospel narrative. What we have recorded is only a sample of what Jesus did.

Henry observes that books might easily have been multiplied about Christ. "Everything that Christ said or did was worth our notice and capable of being improved. He never spoke an idle word and never did an idle thing; nay, He never spoke or did anything mean, little, or trifling, which is more than can be said of the wisest of men." But he wisely adds, "If we do not believe and improve what is written already, neither should we if there had been much more."

The expression which St. John uses in this verse about "the world not receiving the books" is not without difficulty. It cannot of course mean that the material bulk of the books would be so large that the universe could not receive them. This would be absurd, as the "things" spoken of are only the things that Jesus did and said during the three years of His ministry. But what does the expression mean?

(a) Some, as Heinsius and Whitby, think that it means "the world--or unconverted portion of mankind--could not receive, take in, or comprehend more if more was written. There is enough recorded for the conviction of sinners and for the guidance of all who honestly want to be saved." It is a grave objection to this view that the text does not say "the world" simply, but "the world itself." Yet in fairness it must be allowed that in this sense the expression is rather like that in Amos: "The land is not able to bear all His words" (Amos 7:10).

(b) Some think that the phrase must be taken as a strong hyperbolic description of the quantity and value of Christ's works and words during the period of His ministry, and that we must not press an excessively literal interpretation of the phrase. They argue that the figure [of speech] called "hyperbole" is not at all uncommon in Scripture; and that language is often used--when the idea to be conveyed is that of very great size, value, quantity, or number--which evidently cannot be interpreted *literally*. On the whole, I incline to think that this is the right view of the expression, and that it harmonizes well with the fervent, warm-hearted, loving character of the Apostle who lay on Jesus' breast and was commissioned to write the fourth Gospel. He ends with a heart full of Christ, and running over with love to Him, and zeal for His glory, and so he winds up just like himself.

The objection sometimes made, that hyperbolic language is not consistent with inspiration, does not appear to me at all valid. No intelligent and careful reader of the Bible can fail to see that the inspired writers often use hyperbolic phrases--phrases, I mean, that cannot possibly bear a *literal* interpretation and must be regarded as a condescending accommodation to the weakness of man. For example: "Cities walled up to heaven" (Deut. 1:28). "A land that flowed with milk and honey" (Josh. 5:6). "Camels as the sand of the sea for multitude" (Judg. 7:12). All these are phrases which cannot be interpreted *literally*, and which any sensible person knows to be figurative and hyperbolic. Our Lord Himself speaks of "Capernaum being exalted unto heaven;" and says, "If any man come after Me, and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple." (Matt. 11:23; Luke 14:26.) In both cases His language evidently cannot be construed literally.

Calvin observes: "If the Evangelist, casting his eyes on the mightiness of the majesty of Christ, exclaims in astonishment that even the whole world could not contain a full narrative of it, ought we to wonder? Nor is he at all to be blamed if he employs a frequent and ordinary figure of speech for commending the excellence of Christ's works. For he knew how God accommodates Himself to the ordinary way of speaking, on account of our ignorance."

This view is adopted by Augustine, Cyril, Bucer, Musculus, Gualter, Gerhard, Flacius, Ferus, Toletus, Maldonatus, Cornelius à Lapide, Jansenius, Pearson, Henry, Pearce, Scott, Tittman, Bloomfield, Barnes, Alford, Wordsworth, and Burgon.

Lampe protests strongly against the idea of any hyperbole being used, as barely reverent. But I cannot see any force in his argument.

The Greek word that we render "contain" is the same that is rendered in Matt. 19:11 "receive," and in the same sense that it appears used here: "All men cannot receive this saying."

The change from the plural "we know" in verse 24 to the singular "I suppose" in this verse is undoubtedly peculiar. But there are parallel cases quoted by Doddridge (Rom. 7:14 and 1 Thess. 2:18). Euthymius notes it and thinks the insertion of "I suppose" was meant to soften down the

hyperbole.

It is noteworthy that the word "Amen" is the concluding word of each of the four Gospels. It is equivalent to saying, "In truth, verily, it is so." It is equally noteworthy that our Lord is the only person who ever uses the word at the beginning of a sentence.