

John: 14:8–14

From Catena Aurea:

8. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) A declaration so new startled Philip. Our Lord is seen to be man. He confesses Himself to be the Son of God, declares that, if He were known, the Father would be known, that, if He is seen, the Father is seen. The familiarity of the Apostle therefore breaks forth into questioning our Lord, Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. He did not deny He could be seen (non visum negavit), but wished to be shewn him; nor did he wish to see with his bodily eyes, but that He whom he had seen might be made manifest to his understanding. He had seen the Son in the form of man, but how through that form He saw the Father, he did not know. This he wants to be shewn him, shewn to his understanding, not set before his eyes; and then he will be satisfied: And it sufficeth us.

AUGUSTINE. (i. de Trin. c. viii) For to that joy of beholding His face, nothing can be added. Philip understood this, and said, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. But he did not yet understand that he could in the same way have said, Lord, shew us Thyself, and it sufficeth us. But our Lord's answer enlightens him, Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxx. 1) But how is this, when our Lord said that they knew whither He was going, and the way, because they knew Him? The question is easily settled by supposing that some of them knew, and others not; among the latter, Philip.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) He reproves the ignorance of Philip in this respect. For whereas his actions had been strictly divine, such as walking on the water, commanding the winds, remitting sins, raising the dead, He

complained that in His assumed humanity, the Divine nature was not discerned. Accordingly to Philip's request, to be shewn the Father, Our Lord answers, He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxx) When two persons are very like each, we say, If you have seen the one, you have seen the other. So here, He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father; not that He is both the Father, and the Son, but that the Son is an absolute likeness of the Father.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) He does not mean the sight of the bodily eye: for His fleshly part, born of the Virgin, doth not avail towards contemplating the form and image of God in Him; but the Son of God being known with the understanding, it follows that the Father is known also, forasmuch as He is the image of God, not differing from but expressing His Author¹. For our Lord's expressions do not speak of one person solitary and without relationship, but teach us His birth. The Father also excludes the supposition of a single solitary person, and leaves us no other doctrine but that the Father is seen in the Son, by the incommunicable likeness of birth.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxx. 3) But is he to be reprov'd, who, when he has seen the likeness, wishes to see the man of whom he is the likeness? No: our Lord rebuked the question, only with reference to the mind of the asker. Philip asked, as if the Father were better than the Son; and so shewed that He did not know the Son. Which opinion our Lord corrects: Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? as if He said, If it is a great wish with thee to see the Father, at any rate believe what thou dost not see.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) For what excuse was there for ignorance of the Father, or what necessity to shew Him, when the Father was seen in the Son by His essential nature², while by the identity of unity, the Begotten and the Begetter are one: Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?

AUGUSTINE. (i. de. Trin. 8) He wished him to live by faith, before he had sight, and therefore says, Believest thou not? Spiritual vision is the reward of faith, vouchsafed to minds purified by faith.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) But the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, not by a conjunction of two harmonizing essences³, nor by a nature grafted into a more capacious substance as in material bodies, in which it is impossible that what is within can be made external to that which contains it; but by the birth of a nature which is life from life; forasmuch as from God nothing but God can be born.

HILARY. (v. de Trin) The unchangeable God follows, so to speak, His own nature, by begetting unchangeable God. Nor does the perfect birth of unchangeable God from unchangeable God forsake His

own nature. We understand then here the nature of God subsisting in Him, since God is in God, nor besides Him who is God, can any other be God.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 1) Or thus: Philip, because [he thought] he had seen the Son with his bodily eye, wished to see the Father in the same way; perhaps too remembering what the Prophet said, I saw the Lord, and therefore he says, Shew us the Father. (Isa. 6:1) The Jews had asked, who was His Father; and Peter and Thomas, whither He went; and neither were told plainly. Philip therefore, that he might not seem burdensome, after saying, Shew us the Father, adds, And it sufficeth us: i. e. we seek for no more. Our Lord in reply does not say, that he asked an impossible thing, but that he had not seen the Son to begin with, for that if he had seen Him, he would have seen the Father: Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me? He does not say, not seen Me, but, not known Me; not known that the Son, being what the Father is, does in Himself fitly shew the Father. Then dividing the Persons, He says, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; that none might maintain that He was both the Father and the Son. The words shew too that even the Son was not seen in a bodily sense. So if any one takes seeing here, for knowing, I will not contradict him, but will take the sentence as if it was, He that hath known Me, hath known the Father. He shews here His consubstantiality with the Father: He that hath seen My substance, hath seen the Father. Whence it is evident He is not a creature: for all know and see the creature, but not all God; Philip, for instance, who wished to see the substance of the Father. If Christ then had been of another substance from the Father, He would never have said, He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. A man cannot see the substance of gold in silver: one nature cannot be made apparent by another.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxx. 3. and lxxi. 1) He then addresses all of them, not Philip only: The word that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself. What is, I speak not of Myself, but, I that speak am not of Myself? He attributes what He does to Him, from whom He Himself, the doer, is.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) Wherein He neither desires Himself to be the Son, nor hides the existence¹ of His Father's power in Him. In that He speaks, it is Himself that speaks in His own person; in that He speaks not of Himself, He witnesseth His nativity, that He is God from God.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 2) Mark the abundant proof of the unity of substance. For He continues; But the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. As if He said, My Father and I act together, not differently from each other; agreeing with what He said below: If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But why does He pass from words to works? Why does He not say as we might have expected,

He speaketh the words? Because He means to apply what He says both to His doctrine, and to His miracles; or because His words are themselves works.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxx. 1, 2) For he that edifieth his neighbour by speaking, doth a good work. These two sentences are brought against us by different sects of heretics; the Arians saying that the Son is unequal to the Father, because He does not speak of Himself; the Sabellians, that the same who is the Father is the Son. For what is meant, they ask, by, The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works, but, I that dwell in Myself, do these works.

HILARY. (vii. de Trin) That the Father dwells in the Son, shews that He is not single, or solitary; that the Father works by the Son, shews that He is not different or alien. As He is not solitary who doth not speak from Himself, so neither is He alien and separable who speaketh by Him. Having shewn then that the Father spoke and worked in Him, He formally states this union: Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: that they might not think that the Father worketh and speaketh in the Son as by a mere agent or instrument, not by the unity of nature implied in His Divine birth.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxxi. 2) Philip alone was reprov'd before.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 2) But if this does not suffice to shew ray consubstantiality, at least learn it from My works: Or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Ye have seen My miracles, and all the proper signs of My divinity; works which the Father alone worketh, sins remitted, life restored, and the like.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxxi. 2) Believe then for My works' sake, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; for, were we separated, we could not be working together.

14:12–14

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also: and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 2) Having said, Believe for the works' sake, our Lord goes on to declare that He can do much greater than these, and what is more wonderful, give others the power of working them.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. lxxi. 3) But what are these greater works? Is it that the shadow of the Apostles, as they passed, by, healed the sick? It is indeed a greater thing that a shadow should heal, than that the border of a garment should. Nevertheless, by works here our Lord refers to His words. For when He says, My Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works, what are these works but the words which He spoke? And the fruit of those words was their faith. But these were but few converts in comparison with what those disciples made afterwards by their preaching: they converted the Gentiles to the faith. Did not the rich man go away sorrowful from His words? And yet that which one did not do at His own exhortation, many did afterwards when He preached through the disciples. He did greater works when preached by the believing, than when speaking to men's ears. (lxxii. 2). Still these greater works He did by His Apostles, whereas He includes others besides them, when He says, He that believeth on Me. Are we not to compute any one among the believers in Christ, who does not do greater works than Christ? This sounds harsh if not explained. The Apostle says, To him that believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Rom. 4:5) By this work then we shall do the works of Christ, the very believing in Christ being the work of Christ, for He worketh this in us, though not without us. Attend then'; He that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he do also. First I do them, then he will do them: I do them, that he may do them. Do what works but this, viz. that a man, from being a sinner, become just? which thing Christ worketh in us, though not without us. This in truth I call a greater work to do, than to create the heaven and the earth; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the salvation and justification of the predestinated shall remain. (c. 3.). However, the Angels in heaven are the work of Christ; shall he who worketh with Christ for his own justification, do greater even than these? Judge any one which be the greater work, to create the just, or to justify the ungodly? At least, if both be of equal power, the latter hath more of mercy. But it is not necessary to understand all the works of Christ, when He says, greater works than these shall he do. These perhaps refers to the works He had done that hour. He had then been instructing them in the faith¹. And surely it is a less work to preach righteousness, which He did without us, than to justify the ungodly, which He so does in us, as that we do it ourselves. Great things truly did our Lord promise His people, when He went to His Father: Because I go unto My Father.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 2) i. e. I shall not perish, but shall remain in My proper dignity, in heaven. Or He means: It is your part henceforth to work miracles, since I am going.

AUGUSTINE. (Tract. lxxiii. 2) And that no one might attribute the merit to himself, He shews, that even those greater works were His own doing: And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do. Before it was, He shall do, now, I will do: as if He said, Let not this appear impossible to you. He that believeth in Me, will not be greater than I; but I shall do greater works then than now; greater by him that believeth on Me, than now by Myself; which will not be a failing, but a condescension.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 2) In My name, He says. Thus the Apostles; In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk. (Acts 3:6) All the miracles that they did, He did: the hand of the Lord was with them.

THEOPHYLACT. This is an explanation of the doctrine of miracles. It is by prayer, and invocation of His name, that a man is able to work miracles.

AUGUSTINE. (Tract. lxxii. 2) Whatsoever ye shall ask. Then why do we often see believers asking, and not receiving? Perhaps it is that they ask amiss. When a man would make a bad use of what he asks for, God in His mercy does not grant him it. Still if God even in kindness often refuses the requests of believers, how are we to understand, Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, I will do? Was this said to the Apostles only? No. He says above, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also. And if we go to the lives of the Apostles themselves, we shall find that he who laboured more than they all, prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart from him, but was not granted his request. But attend: does not our Lord lay down a certain condition? In My name, which is Christ Jesus. Christ signifies King, Jesus, Saviour. Therefore whatever we ask for that would hinder our salvation, we do not ask in our Saviour's name: and yet He is our Saviour, not only when He does what we ask, but also when He does not. When He sees us ask any thing to the disadvantage of our salvation, He shews Himself our Saviour by not doing it. The physician knows whether what the sick man asks for is to the advantage or disadvantage of his health; and does not allow what would be to his hurt, though the sick man himself desires it; but looks to his final cure. And some things we may even ask in His name, and He will not grant them us at the time, though He will some time. What we ask for is deferred, not denied. He adds, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. The Son does not do any thing without the Father, inasmuch as He does it in order that the Father may be glorified in Him.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxiv. 2) For when the great power of the Son is manifested, He that begat Him is glorified. He introduces this last, to confirm the truth of what He has said.

THEOPHYLACT. Observe the order (ἀκολουθίαν) in which the glorifying of the Father comes. In the name of Jesus miracles were done, by which men were made to believe the Apostles' preaching. This brought them to the knowledge of the Father, and thus the Father was glorified in the Son.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

14:8 Lord, Show Us the Father

Philip Was Not Tampering with the Faith.

Hilary of Poitiers: The novel sound of these words of Jesus disturbed the apostle Philip. A man is before their eyes. This man asserts that he is the Son of God and declares that when they have known him they will know the Father. He tells them that they have seen the Father and that, because they have seen him, they shall know him hereafter.... And so Philip spoke out with the loyalty and confidence of an apostle, requesting, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will suffice." He was not tampering with the faith. It was only a mistake made in ignorance.... Philip did not deny that the Father could be seen but only asked that he might see him. He did not ask that the Father should be unveiled so that he could see him with his bodily eyes, but that he might have some further indication that would enlighten him concerning how the Father could be seen. For he had seen the Son under the aspect of humanity but cannot understand how he could thereby have seen the Father. On the Trinity 7.35.

Show Us the Father?

Augustine: When Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us," he understood well enough that being shown the Father could satisfy him. But if the one who is equal to the Father was not enough for him, how would the Father be enough? And why wasn't he enough for him? Because he was not seen. Why wasn't he seen? Because the eye he could be seen with was not yet whole. As for the Lord's body, which could be seen with these eyes, it was not only the ones who revered him who saw him but also the Jews who crucified him. So if he wanted to be seen in another way, it means he was requiring other eyes. And that is why he gave this reply to the one who said, "Show us the Father, and that is enough for us: Have I been with you all this time, and you do not know me? Philip, whoever sees me also sees the Father." And to heal the eyes of faith in the meantime, he is first admonished in terms of faith, so that he

may be enabled to attain to sight. And in case Philip should assume that God is to be thought of in the same way as he saw the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, he immediately added, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me?" Sermon 88.4.

14:9 Seeing the Father in and Through the Son

The Father's Portrait in the Son.

Ambrose: By means of this image the Lord showed Philip the Father. Yes, he who looks on the Son sees, in portrait, the Father. Notice what kind of portrait is spoken of. It is truth, righteousness, the power of God. It is not silent, for it is the Word. It is not insensible, for it is Wisdom. It is not vain and foolish, for it is power. It is not soulless, for it is the life. It is not dead, for it is the resurrection. On the Christian Faith 1.7.50.

Seeing the Father in the Son.

Chrysostom: In the Old Testament it says, "No one shall see my face and live." What does Christ say? Very reprovingly he says, "Have I been with you for so long, and have you not known me, Philip?" He did not say "have you not seen" but "have you not known me." "Why," Philip might say, "would I want to learn anything concerning you? At present I want to see your Father, and you say to me, 'Have you not known me?' " What connection then does this have with the question? Surely a very close one. For if he is that which the Father is, yet continues to be a Son, there is a definite reason for showing in himself the one who begat him. Then to distinguish the persons he says, "He who has seen me has seen the Father," in case anyone should assert that the same person is Father and Son. For had he been the Father, he would not have said, "He who has seen me has seen him." Homilies on the Gospel of John 74.1.

Only One Image of God Spoken of in Scripture.

Ambrose: In the church, I know of only one image, that is, the image of the unseen God. God has said about this image, "Let us make man [humankind] in our image." Of this image it is written that Christ is the "effulgence of the glory and impress of his hypostasis." In that image, I perceive the Father as the Lord Jesus himself has said, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father." For this image is not separated from the Father, which indeed has taught me the unity of the Trinity, saying, "I and the Father are one," and again, "All things whatever the Father has are mine." [In this image, also perceive] the Holy Spirit,

seeing that the Spirit is Christ's and has received of Christ, as it is written, "He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you." Sermon Against Auxentius 32.

Not Speaking of a Bodily Likeness Here.

Hilary of Poitiers: I ask whether he is the visible likeness of the invisible God and whether the infinite God can also be presented to view under the likeness of a finite form. For a likeness must necessarily repeat the form of that of which it is the likeness. Let those, however, who want there to be a nature of a different sort in the Son determine what sort of likeness of the invisible God they wish the Son to be. Is it a bodily likeness exposed to the gaze and moving from place to place with human gait and motion? No, rather let them remember that according to the Gospels and the prophets both Christ is a Spirit and God is a Spirit. If they confine this Christ the spirit within the bounds of shape and body, such a corporeal Christ will not be the likeness of the invisible God, nor will a finite limitation represent that which is infinite. On the Trinity 8.48.

The Identification of the Divine Will

Basil the Great: "He who has seen me has seen the Father"; this does not mean that he has seen the image and the form of the divine nature, since the divine nature is simple, not composed of various parts. Goodness of will is a current in the stream of the divine essence, and thus is perceived to be the same in the Father and the Son. On the Holy Spirit 8.21.

Not Recognizing the Father's Nature.

Hilary of Poitiers: He rebukes the apostle for defective knowledge of himself. For previously he had said that when he was known the Father was known also. But what did they mean when he complained that for so long they had not known him? It means this: that if they had known him, they must have recognized in him the Godhead that belongs to his Father's nature. For his works were the peculiar works of God. On the Trinity 7.36.

14:10a Mutual Indwelling

The Mutual Indwelling Is Incomprehensible.

Hilary of Poitiers: The words of the Lord, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me,” confuse many minds, and this is only natural since the powers of human reason cannot provide them with any intelligible meaning. It seems impossible that one object should be both within and without another, or that—since it is laid down that the beings of whom we are treating, although they do not dwell apart, retain their separate existence and condition—these beings can reciprocally contain one another so that one should permanently envelope and be permanently enveloped by the other whom yet he envelopes. This is a problem that human wisdom will never solve, nor will human research ever find an analogy for this condition of divine existence. But God can be what human beings cannot understand. On the Trinity 3.1.

Father and Son Are in Each Other.

Gregory of Nyssa: The Lord speaks the truth who says, “I am in the Father and the Father in me”—plainly, the one in his entirety is in the other in his entirety. The Father does not have an overwhelming presence in the Son. The Son is not deficient in the Father. And the Lord also says that the Son should be honored. And, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father,” and, “No one fully knows the Father except the Son.” In all of this, there is no hint ... of any variation in glory or of essence or anything else between the Father and the Son. Against Eunomius 2.4.

The Son Is Not Falsely Concealing That He Is the Father.

Hilary of Poitiers: In no other words than these that the Son has used can the fact be stated that Father and Son, being alike in nature, are inseparable. The Son, who is the way and the truth and the life, is not deceiving us by some theatrical transformation of names and aspects when he, while wearing manhood, styles himself the Son of God. He is not falsely concealing the fact that he is God the Father. He is not a single person who hides his features under a mask so that we might imagine that two are present. He is not a solitary being, now posing as his own Son, and then again calling himself the Father, adorning the one unchanging nature with varying names.... It is the height of impiety to believe that Father and Son are two gods. It is sacrilege to assert that Father and Son are singularly God. It is blasphemy to deny the unity, consisting in sameness of kind, of God from God. On the Trinity 7.39.

No Separation or Division.

Hilary of Poitiers: That the Father dwells in the Son proves that the Father is not isolated and alone. That the Father works through the Son proves that the Son is not an alien or a stranger. There cannot be one person only, for he speaks not of himself. And, conversely, they cannot be separate and divided when the one speaks through the voice of the other. These words are the revelation of the mystery of their unity. On the Trinity 7.40.

14:10b Mutual Words and Works

The Father Would Not Have Used Different Words.

Cyril of Alexandria: If, he would say, my Father had spoken anything to you, he would not have used any other words than these that I am now speaking. For so great is the equality in essence between myself and him that my words are his words, and whatever I do may be believed to be his actions. For, because he “abides in me,” by reason of the exact equivalence in essence, he himself does the works. For since the Godhead is one in the Father, in the Son and in the Spirit, every word that comes from the Father comes always through the Son by the Spirit. Every work or miracle is through the Son by the Spirit, and yet it is considered as coming from the Father. For the Son is not apart from the essence of the Father, nor indeed is the Holy Spirit. But the Son, being in the Father and having the Father again in himself, claims that the Father is the doer of the works. For the nature of the Father is mighty in operation and shines out clearly in the Son.

And one might add to this another meaning that is involved, suggested clearly by the principles that underlie the incarnation. He says, “I speak not of myself,” meaning, not in separation from or in lack of agreement with God the Father. For since he appeared to those who saw him in human form, he refers his words to the divine nature, as speaking in the person of the Father. It is the same with his actions. He almost seems to say, Do not let this human form deprive me of that reverent estimation that is due and befitting to me, and do not suppose that my words are those of a mere human or of one like yourselves. Rather, believe them to be in very truth divine words that would be just as fitting for the Father as they are for me. And he is the one who works, “abiding in me.” For I am in him, and he is in me. Do not think therefore that a mighty and extraordinary privilege was granted to the people of former days because they saw God in a vision of fire and heard his voice speaking to them. For you have in reality seen the

Father through me and in me, since I have appeared among you, being in my nature God, and “have come visibly,” according to the words of the psalmist. And be well assured that in hearing my words, you heard the words of the Father. And you have been spectators of his works and of the might that is in him. For by me he speaks as by his own Word. And in me he carries out and achieves his wondrous works, as though by his own power. Commentary on the Gospel of John 9.

The Father Works Together with the Son.

Augustine: The Father was not born of the Virgin, and yet this birth of the Son from the Virgin was the work of both Father and Son. The Father did not suffer on the cross, and yet the passion of the Son was the work of both Father and Son. The Father did not rise again from the dead, and yet the resurrection of the Son was the work of both Father and Son. You have the persons quite distinct, and their working inseparable. So let us never say that the Father worked anything without the Son, the Son anything without the Father. Or perhaps you are worried about the miracles Jesus did, in case perhaps he did some that the Father did not do? Then what about “But the Father abiding in me does his works”? Sermon 52.14.

The Divine Three Are Inseparable.

Augustine: So then, with all these ways of speaking we still have to understand that the activities of the divine three are inseparable, so that when an activity is attributed to the Father he is not taken to engage in it without the Son and the Holy Spirit. And when it is an activity of the Son, it is not without the Son and the Holy Spirit. And when it is an activity of the Son, it is not without the Father and the Son. That being the case, those who have the right faith, or better still the right understanding as far as they can, know well enough that the reason it is said about the Father, “He does the works,” is that the works have their origin in the one from whom the co-working persons have their very existence. The Son, you see, is born of him, and the Holy Spirit proceeds primarily from him of whom the Son is born, being the Spirit common to them both. Sermon 71.26.

The Image Shares Attributes of the Father.

Athanasius: Let us proceed then to consider the attributes of the Father, and we shall come to know whether this Image is really his. The Father is eternal, immortal, powerful, light, King, Sovereign, God, Lord, Creator and Maker. These attributes must be in the Image to make it true that whoever “has seen”

the Son “has seen the Father.” If the Son is not all this, but, as the Arians consider, he is originate and not eternal, this is not a true image of the Father, unless indeed they give up shame and go on to say that the title of image, given to the Son, is not a token of a similar essence, but his name only. Discourses Against the Arians 1.21.

14:11 Believe There Is Mutual Indwelling and Works

Unity with the Father Is Recognized.

Hilary of Poitiers: His power belonged to his nature, and his working was the exercise of that power. In the exercise of that power, then, they might recognize in him the unity with the Father’s nature. To the extent that anyone recognized him to be God in the power of his nature, that person would come to know God the Father who was present in that mighty nature. The Son, who is equal with the Father, showed by his works that the Father could be seen in him so that when we perceived in the Son a nature like the Father’s in its power, we might know that in Father and Son there is no distinction of nature. On the Trinity 9.52.

Against Those Who Deny the Divinity of Christ.

Cyril of Alexandria: In these words Christ distinctly says that he could never have worked and accomplished those miracles that are unique to the divine nature if he, himself, had not been essentially of the same divine nature.... [Only heretics] whose hearts are devoid of the Holy Spirit make separations between the Father and the Son and assert that the Son is essentially and completely severed from the Father in the way that created things and divine works are separate from God the Father. Commentary on the Gospel of John 9.

14:12 Believers Also Do Even Greater Works

We Can Do Similar Works.

Ambrose: Skillfully inserting here the word also, he has allowed us similarity and yet has not ascribed natural unity. The work of the Father and the work of the Son, therefore, are one. On the Christian Faith 3.11.91.

Working in Christ.

Augustine: And so he promised that he himself would also do those greater works. Do not let the servant exalt himself above his Lord or the disciple above his Master. He says that they will do greater works than he does himself, but it is all by his doing such works in or by them, and not as if they did them of themselves. And so we have the song that is addressed to him, "I will love you, O Lord, my strength." But what, then, are those greater works? Was it that their very shadow, as they themselves passed by, that healed the sick? For it is a mightier thing for a shadow, than for the hem of a garment, to possess the power of healing. The one work was done by Christ himself, the other by them. And yet it was he that did both. Tractates on the Gospel of John 71.3.

Our Believing Is the Work of Christ.

Augustine: But there is still something to excite thought in his doing such greater works by the apostles. For he did not say, as if merely with reference to them, "the works that I do shall you do also. And greater works than these shall you do," but wishing to be understood as speaking of all that belonged to his family, he said, "He who believes in me, the works that I do shall he do also. And greater works than these shall he do." If, then, he who believes shall do such works, he who shall not do them is certainly no believer, just as "He who loves me, keeps my commandments" implies, of course, that whoever does not keep them does not love.... In a similar way, also, it is said here, "He who believes in me shall do such works." The one who does not do good works, therefore, is no believer. What have we here, then, brothers? Is it that one is not to be counted among believers in Christ who will not do greater works than Christ? It would be hard, unreasonable, intolerable to suppose so, that is, unless it is rightly understood. Let us listen, then, to the apostle when he says, "To him who believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." This is the work in which we may be doing the works of Christ, for even our very believing in Christ is the work of Christ. Tractates on the Gospel of John 72.2.

Exceeding the Power of Their Teacher.

Theodore of Heraclea: This refers to the other miracles that the apostles did, such as healing a man through their shadow falling on him. But this incident did not reveal the fullness of this saying, but rather it was fulfilled in the fact that, when he used the power of the Godhead for an act of kindness, the disciples on the one hand worked through the power given to them for the service of those who believe and the punishment of the extremely wicked, and on the other hand they exceeded the power of their teacher,

even though he was mightier in his ability to punish the godless, since he chose to restrain and control his power to punish in the meantime until the right moment of judgment. Fragments on John 259.

14:13–14 Asking in Jesus' Name

Requests Need to Be Made Not Only to the Father.

Ambrose: But if we think it impious to believe that the Father has handed over all judgment to the Son in such a way that he does not have it himself—for he has it and cannot lose what the divine majesty has by its very nature—we ought to consider it equally impious to suppose that the Son cannot give what either men and women can merit or any creature can receive, especially as he himself has said, “I go to my Father, and whatever you shall ask of him in my name, that will I do.” For if the Son cannot give what the Father can give, the Truth has lied and cannot do what the Father has been asked for in his name. He therefore did not say, “For whom it has been prepared by my Father,” in order that requests should be made only of the Father. For all things that are asked of the Father, [the Son] has declared that he [himself] will give. And finally, he did not say, “Whatever you shall ask of me, that will I do” but “Whatever you shall ask of him in my name, that will I do.” On the Christian Faith 5.5.66.

Why Don't Believers Always Receive?

Augustine: “Whatever you shall ask.” Then why do we often see believers asking and not receiving? Perhaps it is that they do not ask correctly.... When a person would make a bad use of what he asks for, God in his mercy does not grant him it. It is even more the case that if someone asks what would, if answered, only tend to his injury, there is surely greater cause to fear, in case what God could not withhold with kindness, he should give in his anger.... Still if God even in kindness often refuses the requests of believers, how are we to understand “Whatever you shall ask in my name, I will do”? Was this said to the apostles only? No. He says above, “He who believes in me, the works that I do he shall do also.” ... And if we go to the lives of the apostles themselves, we shall find that he who labored more than them all prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart from him but was not granted his request.... Wake up then, believer, and note what is stated here: “In my name.” That [name] is Christ Jesus. Christ signifies King, Jesus signifies Savior.... Therefore whatever we ask for that would hinder our salvation, we do not ask in our Savior's name, and yet he is our Savior not only when he does what we ask but also when he does not. When he sees us ask anything to the disadvantage of our salvation, he shows himself our Savior by

not doing it. The physician knows whether what the sick person asks for is to the advantage or disadvantage of his health. And [the physician] does not allow what would be harmful to him, though the sick person himself desires it. But the physician looks to his final cure.... And some things we may even ask in his name, and he will not grant them to us at the time, though he will some time. What we ask for is deferred, not denied.... He adds, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The Son does not do anything without the Father, inasmuch as he does it in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son, ... for the Father and Son are one. Tractates on the Gospel of John 73.1–4.