I

Individualism was more at home in the 'Liberal Protestant' world than it is in the present climate of theology. For the 'Liberal Protestant' frame of thought it was easy to recognise the kingship of God in each individual who accepted the will of God, but harder to grasp the idea of Christianity as incorporation by baptism into membership of the Body of Christ—a corporate existence, entered upon and maintained sacramentally and institutionally. It is one of the results of the revival of 'biblical theology' that, of the two, the latter emphasis—the corporate and the sacramental—has come to be widely recognised as closer to the roots of authentic Christianity.

But this recovery of a theology of the Church has tended to swing the pendulum too far, sometimes actually to distort the picture and to engender an unwarranted suspicion of anything that sounds 'individualistic'. The famous Lucan saying (Lk. xvii 21) about the kingdom of God being ἐν τῷ ὕδατι is today generally so interpreted as to rescue it from the unacceptable inward and individual sense; or, if there were an acceptable alternative today, it might be to blame 'Luke the Hellene' for introducing an alien individualism into the doctrine of the kingdom. It is almost a slur on a biblical writer—or else on his expositor—if an individualistic note is detected.

That may be a caricature of the situation. But if it contains even a modicum of truth, then perhaps it is not untimely to enter a plea for a reappraisal of the Johannine outlook in this particular respect. To that end I offer this essay, uncertain whether it will meet with approval from the distinguished scholar in whose honour it is presented; certain only that I am deeply indebted to him, both for warm personal friendship when I stayed at Erlangen in 1952, and for all that I have learnt from the publications he has generously presented to me, including a copy of his important Theologie des
Neuen Testaments. Since the essay was first drafted, my attention has been drawn to an early paper by another very good Erlangen friend, Dr. G. Stählin (now of Mainz), which in part anticipates my theme, and to which I am indebted for further insights. 1) Something of my viewpoint is also shared with Dr. E. Schweizer in the works cited below.

My thesis is that the Fourth Gospel is one of the most strongly individualistic of all the New Testament writings, and that the 'realized eschatology' which is so familiar a feature of this Gospel is the result rather of this individualism than of anything more profound or radical in its thought. This may sound a foolish thesis. St John's Gospel is generally thought of as one of the chief documents of Christian unity and organic life. One's thoughts immediately fly to the temple of Christ's body, to the Shepherd and the one flock, to the vine and the branches, to the ut omnes unum sint. 2) Of course! But is that the whole story?

II

Picking up the point about 'realized eschatology' first, I begin from xiv 21-23, which, I submit, is a far more explicitly individualistic type of eschatology than even the Lucan ἐν τῷ ὑμῖν interpreted in the 'inward' sense. The immediate antecedents of this passage are a reference to a return of Christ after his departure (v. 18 ὃν ἐκ νησίῳ ἡμῶν ἐφεξῆς ἐρχόμαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς), and the interpretation of His return not as a public manifestation to the whole world but as a manifestation to the disciples only (v. 19 δό κόσμου με ὄνειδεν θεωρεῖν, ὑμεῖς δὲ θεωρεῖτε με). For them, admittedly, it will be an understanding of something that seems emphatically 'corporate'—the 'mutual coherience' of Christ and the Father and of Christ and the disciples (v. 20 γνώστε υμεῖς ἃτι ἐγώ ἐν τῷ πατρί μου καὶ υμεῖς ἐν ἐμοὶ κάθω ἐν υμῖν). And yet, this seems to be immediately interpreted (in keeping with v. 19) in such individualistic terms that

1) G. Stählin, „Zum Problem der johanneischen Eschatologie“, ZNTW 33 (1934), 225.