overlooked, that this discourse had, besides its manifold and wonderful meaning  
for us all, an especial moral one as applied to the woman,—who, by successive  
draughts at the ‘broken cistern’ of carnal  
lust, had been vainly seeking solace:—  
and this consideration serves to bind on  
the following verses (ver. 16 ff.) to the  
preceding, by another link besides those  
noticed below.

**15.]** This request  
seems to be made still under a misunderstanding, but not so great an one as at  
first sight appears. She apprehends this  
water as something not requiring a *water-pot* to draw as something whose power  
shall never fail ;—which shall quench thirst  
for ever;—and half in banter, half in  
earnest, wishing perhaps besides to see  
whether the gift would after all be conferred, and how,—she mingles in with  
“*this water*,’—implying some view of  
its distinct nature,—her ‘not coming  
hither to draw,’—her willing avoidance of  
the toil of her noonday journey to the well.  
We must be able to enter into the complication of her character, and the impressions made on her by the strange things  
which she has heard, fully to appreciate  
the spirit of this answer.

**16.]** The connexion of this verse with the foregoing  
has been much disputed ; and the strangest,  
and most unworthy views have been taken  
of it. Some (e.g. Grotius) have strangely  
referred it to the supposed indecorum of  
the longer continuance of the colloquy with  
the woman alone; some more strangely  
still (Cyril of Alexandria) to the incapacity  
of the female mind to apprehend the matters of which He was to speak. Both these  
need surely no refutation. The band of  
women from Galilee, ‘last at the cross, and  
earliest at the tomb,’ are a sufficient answer  
to them.

Those approach nearer the  
truth, who believe the command to have  
been given *to awaken her conscience*; or  
to shew her the divine knowledge which  
the Lord had of her heart. But I am persuaded that the right account is found, in  
viewing this command, as *the first step of  
granting her request, “give me this water*.”  
The first work of the Spirit of God, and of  
Him who here spoke in the fulness of that  
Spirit, is, to *convince of sin*. The ‘give  
me this water’ was not so simple a matter  
as she supposed. The heart must first be  
laid bare before the wisdom of God: the  
secret sins set in the light of His countenance; and this our Lord here does. The command itself is of course given in the  
fulness of knowledge of her sinful condition of life. In every conversation which  
our Lord held with men, while He connects   
usually one remark with another by  
the common links which bind human  
thought, we perceive that He knows, and  
sees through, those with whom He speaks.

**17.]** This answer is not for a moment to be treated as something unexpected by Him who commanded her. He  
*has before Him her whole life of sin*, which  
she in vain endeavours to cover by the  
doubtful words of this verse.

**18.]** There was *literal* truth, but no more, in  
the woman’s answer: and the Lord, by  
His divine knowledge, detects the hidden  
falsehood of it. Notice it is **true** (a fact  
—bare truth), not **truly**: this *one word*was *true*: further shewn by the emphatic  
position of the word **husband** in our Lord’s  
answer,—which was not so placed in hers.

**thou hast had five husbands]** These  
five *were certainly lawful husbands*; they  
are distinguished from the sixth, who *was  
not*;—probably the woman had been separated from some by divorce (the law of  
which was but loose among the Samaritans),—from some by death,—or perhaps  
by other reasons more or less discreditable  
to her character, which had now become  
degraded into that of an openly licentious  
woman, The conviction of sin here lies  
beneath the surface: it is not pressed, nor  
at the moment does it seem to have worked  
deeply, for she goes on with the conversation with apparent indifference to it; but  
our Lord’s words in vv. 25, 26 would tend  
to infix it more deeply, and we find at ver.  
29, that it had been working during her